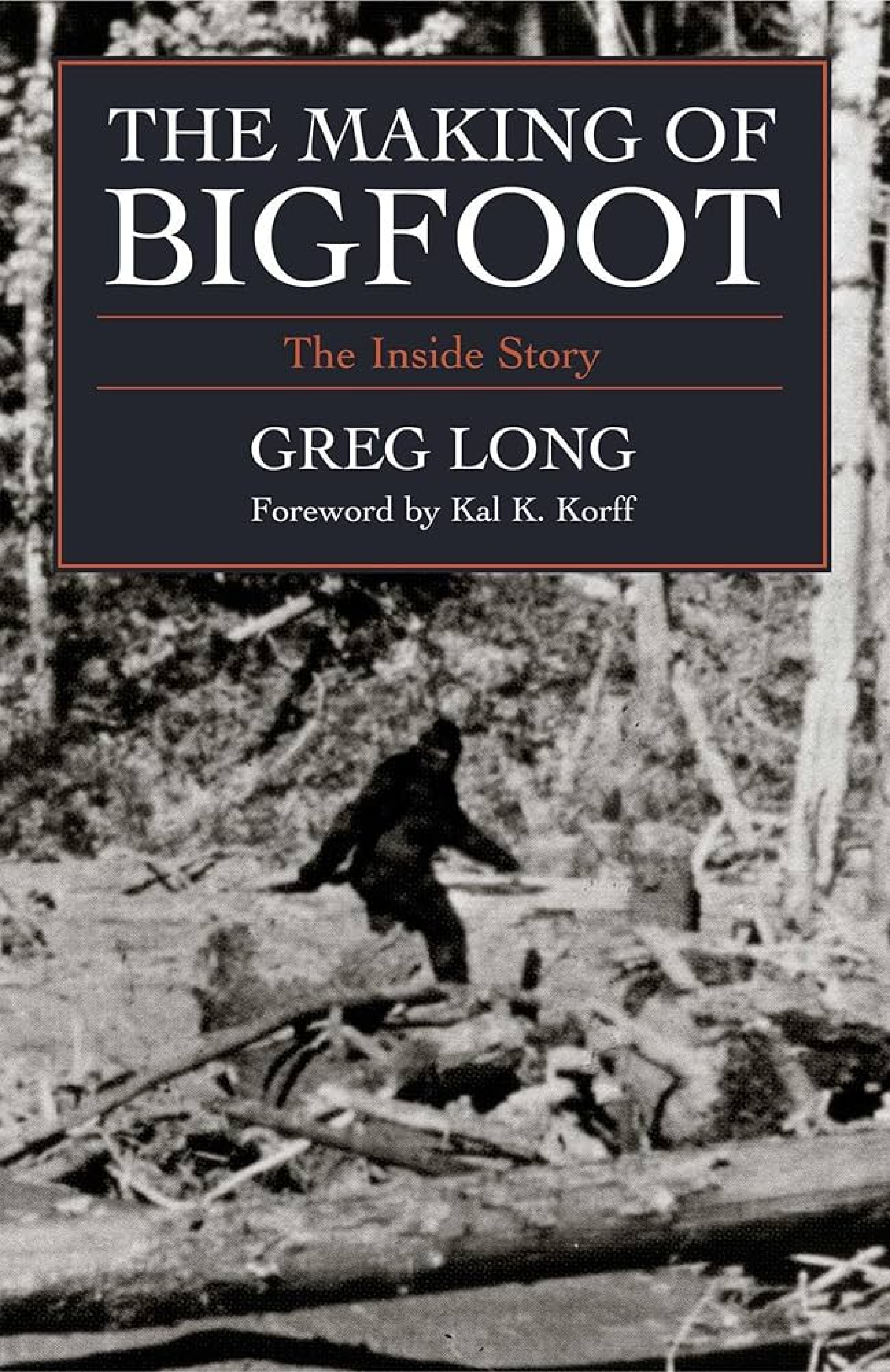
THE MAKING OF BIGFOOT

The Inside Story

GREG LONG

Foreword by Kal K. Korff



THE MAKING OF BIGFOOT

After nearly forty years of secrecy, the real truth is finally revealed behind the famous Roger Patterson "Bigfoot" film — a hoax that has managed to fool scores of scientists and millions of people around the world.

In this riveting and historic book, author Greg Long reveals, for the first time, the *identity* of the man who actually *wore* the Bigfoot costume in the famous Patterson film! In addition to reading his *exclusive, full confession,* Long also presents the testimony of another equally important eyewitness: the man *who made and then sold* the "Bigfoot" suit to Roger Patterson, and later advised him on how to make the costume look more "authentic."

Other historic breakthroughs in *The Making of Bigfoot* include the actual legal contract that Roger Patterson signed and the *exclusive* interview with a female investor who gave him money to create his "Bigfoot" film; *exclusive* testimony from the man who advised Patterson on *how to improve the realism* of his "Bigfoot tracks" to make them more believable; and the testimonies of dozens of eyewitnesses, including *several exclusive, firsthand accounts* from individuals who *independently* saw the "Bigfoot" costume suit after Patterson used it to fake the film.

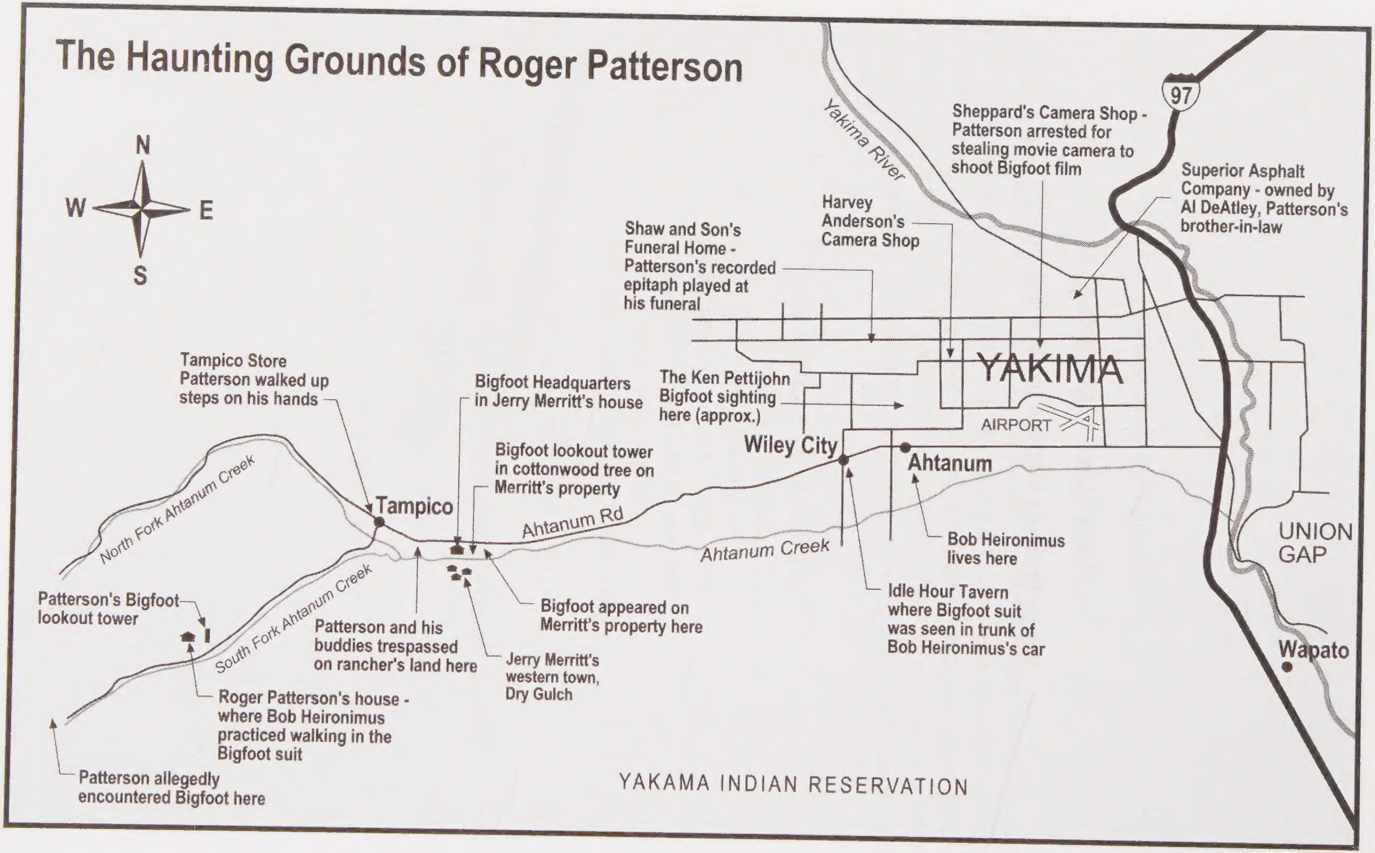
Regardless of your opinion about the subject, *The Making of Bigfoot* is a spell-binding account that will have you glued to each page. It is a classic gumshoe detective story, told in gripping first-person narrative — it's not only a fascinating story, but the facts it presents and the startling information it reveals are all *true*!

(continued on back flap)

THE MAKING OF
BIGFOOT

Roger Patterson of Yakima, Washington, being interviewed by an unknown reporter shortly after he announced that he had filmed a "Bigfoot" in Northern California on October 20, 1967. Courtesy of Les Patterson.

The Haunting Grounds of Roger Patterson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Yakima River
Sheppard's Camera Shop - Patterson arrested for stealing movie camera to shoot Bigfoot film
Superior Asphalt Company - owned by Al DeAtley, Patterson's brother-in-law
Harvey Anderson's Camera Shop
Shaw and Son's Funeral Home - Patterson's recorded epitaph played at his funeral
YAKIMA
AIRPORT
The Ken Pettijohn Bigfoot sighting here (approx.)
Tampico Store Patterson walked up steps on his hands
Bigfoot Headquarters in Jerry Merritt's house
Bigfoot lookout tower in cottonwood tree on Merritt's property
Wiley City
Ahtanum
Tampico
North Fork Ahtanum Creek
Ahtanum Rd
Ahtanum Creek
UNION GAP
Bob Heironimus lives here
Patterson's Bigfoot lookout tower
South Fork Ahtanum Creek
Patterson and his buddies trespassed on rancher's land here
Bigfoot appeared on Merritt's property here
Jerry Merritt's western town, Dry Gulch
Idle Hour Tavern where Bigfoot suit was seen in trunk of Bob Heironimus's car
Wapato
Roger Patterson's house - where Bob Heironimus practiced walking in the Bigfoot suit
Patterson allegedly encountered Bigfoot here
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FOREWORD

Greg Long's startling exposé of Roger Patterson's life and his "Bigfoot" film is truly a historic milestone in the field of investigative journalism.

Regardless of one's opinions concerning the reality of so-called Bigfoot or any similar type creatures, thanks to the publication of this book, no one will be able to ignore the powerful and exclusive facts that are published here along with the startling truths Greg Long has uncovered.

This work is important because it presents the first-ever, no-holds-barred detailed biography of Roger Patterson, the person behind so much of the Bigfoot "mystery" as it has come to be known and widely believed today. By the time you finish reading this story, you'll see what a real "character" Patterson was, to put it politely. Best yet, Greg tells Patterson's story using the words of those who knew him intimately, worked with him, and were involved in hatching various schemes. The rich and detailed accounts that are presented here are not in any way just "Greg's spin" on things. Instead, they are recollections told in the very words of those who knew Patterson best, with some testifying on record here for the first time. In short, what Greg has uncovered will amaze, intrigue, and shock everyone, regardless of whether he or she is a Bigfoot "believer" or a "neutralite" or even the most hardened skeptic.

Greg Long is truly a rare gem who stands out from among the many authors and interested parties nowadays who write about the so-called paranormal and profess to be "investigators." With Greg, you won't find any false claims, nor will you find supposition passed off or disguised as if it were fact. Instead, you get nothing but the truth, regardless of what that truth might be. At the risk of sounding redundant, Greg is objective, scientific, and is not afraid to "call it like it really is."

These attributes are especially important when one considers today's society and its seemingly endless and rapid march toward self-indulgence and self-destruction; continually dumbed-down, soundbite-laden television; and less-than-objective or even factual reporting. In today's modern world, where critical thinking is rapidly becoming a lost and rarely practiced discipline, despite everyone's unprecedented access to equally unprecedented amounts of information, there's nothing like the good, solid, gumshoe detective work of an investigative journalist. When combined with the talents of a good author who can also write a compelling story, the result is a wonderful work such as this. Greg Long has managed to achieve all of the above in this book, and we are much better off for it.

The public has a right to know whenever it is possible to determine the truth behind a purported claim or incident, especially when it concerns the so-called paranormal or subjects as controversial as the world-famous, now discredited, Roger Patterson "Bigfoot" film.

Now that the truth has been exposed and is revealed here for the first time ever, let us rejoice in this accomplishment, keep it in proper perspective, and learn the vitally important lessons from Greg's research that can benefit all of us.

Thanks to Greg's book, we now know the facts about the Patterson hoax and the true nature of the "creature" it purports to depict. It is not a species popularly known as "Bigfoot"; it is in fact an ordinary man, a man in a costume. A costume that was worn for a film that was made to deliberately deceive people, while earning *millions* of dollars for its promoters during the past nearly forty years in what can only be called fraud—*consumer fraud*, to be precise. The public was "sold" both a story and a product that were bogus, which is illegal, and the scam continues today!

Those who persist in being less than truthful about the now discredited and exposed Roger Patterson Bigfoot hoax film, especially its promoters, should be ashamed of their dishonest behavior and finally admit the truth. The promoters should be condemned by the public and held accountable for their ongoing actions, if not investigated by the proper authorities for possible consumer fraud.

The time has now come for everyone reading this to finally accept the facts: The Roger Patterson "Bigfoot" film is a hoax. The man who wore the actual Bigfoot costume has not only been finally located, but he has now made a full confession. He has held nothing back, and he mentions names of people who are still alive. For the first time in this exclusive work, you will now read and hear his words.

There can be no question his account is true.

Perhaps the only "mystery" left now, is WHY so many millions of people, especially scientists and so-called Bigfoot "experts" and self-proclaimed "researchers," could so easily have been fooled. Being one of the few individuals who has studied this subject, but never fell for this hoax, I have a legitimate right to ask this question: *What the hell were they thinking?*

It is a question *everyone* should now be asking themselves, especially since the truth and full reality of the hoax have now caught up with the past, and the schemes of the perpetrators are now being made public for the very first time.

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INTRODUCTION

"He who seeketh long enough and hard enough will find the truth, whatever that truth may be."

Roger Patterson,
Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?

In Tibet, they call him *Yeti*. In Russia, *Almas*. In China, *Yeren*. The Australians report the *Yowie*. From Malaysia and Indonesia come sightings of the *Orang Pendek*. In the United States, the Indians of the Great Northwest call him *Sasquatch*. To most of us, he is simply *Bigfoot*, a huge, bipedal, hairy man-ape with heavy, sloping brows, a sagittal crest on its head, a short neck, and long arms. Despite thousands of witness reports, sightings, and castings of Bigfoot tracks, the mysterious creature remains elusive. No bones or carcass of a Bigfoot has ever been found. Bigfoot, it seems, can never be killed or captured, only glimpsed.

These giant, hairy monsters grip the imagination of millions of people around the world. But do the monsters exist?

A surprisingly large number of people think so. Many of them base their belief on a single piece of evidence: a short, sixty-second strip of sixteen-millimeter color film allegedly taken of a Bigfoot on October 20, 1967, near Bluff Creek in Northern California. The photographer was Roger Patterson of Yakima, Washington. With Patterson that day was his sidekick, Bob Gimlin, also from Yakima.

For more than thirty-five years avid Bigfoot believers have embraced the Patterson film as the gospel truth. In fact, the "Bigfoot community" considers the film the "gold standard" of all Bigfoot evidence, "proving" the existence of Bigfoot. No other piece of evidence exists, they contend, which is as compelling, convincing, and indisputable. No human being, they say, could have constructed a costume with as many subtle and incomparable Bigfoot features as those of the Bigfoot in Patterson's footage. For years, numerous statements, articles, and reports have been issued by the believers insisting that the creature in Patterson's film is of an undiscovered, unknown animal—a real Bigfoot.

I have a deep and abiding interest in contemporary stories of "unexplained mysteries," and for more than twenty-five years have investigated and studied such phenomena as UFOs, famed Northwest pilot Kenneth Arnold's sighting of nine flying saucers near Mount Rainier in Washington, orange balls of light, mysterious sounds, apparitions, and a wide variety of purportedly unusual experiences that don't fit any familiar category.

Let me state for the record that I am open to many ideas, theories, and possibilities. The world is, as I have personally discovered, far stranger than we think, and every day we find new surprises and startling new discoveries. However, I am also committed to the practice of *science* and *critical thinking* as tools to help us understand ourselves and our universe.

As a resident of the beautiful Pacific Northwest since 1978, I have found it impossible to avoid the stories of Bigfoot that are endemic to the region. I have never thought that Bigfoot was purely fiction, nor am I a "believer." Like any good scientific practitioner I am always looking for *solid,* hard evidence.

With this in mind, in November 1998 I decided to probe into the Patterson film. Frankly, I didn't believe I would find much. On the contrary, what I discovered was startling. In fact, I was flooded with information just waiting to be gathered. It became evident early on that during all the years that Patterson's Bigfoot sauntered—aided by the media—deeper and deeper into the public imagination, *never once* had any Bigfoot "investigator," scientist, or journalist ever asked the obvious questions: "Who was Roger Patterson anyway? What was his character? What did he value? How did he behave? Was he telling the truth?"

I believe that incredible stories demand credible witnesses. Honesty and integrity form the fundamental solid basis of any claim. What I discovered, and present here for the very first time anywhere, totally shatters the conventional view of Roger Patterson, the pioneering "Bigfoot hunter," and the authenticity of the Patterson film. The Bigfoot community—small, closed, and suspicious—has carefully nurtured and protected this conventional view for decades.

Not once in the entire history of the Bigfoot field, did *any* Bigfoot investigator or researcher dare to ever make public the *facts* about Roger Patterson. Instead, the incriminating and overwhelming evidence has been purposely brushed aside, ignored, hidden, and even suppressed.

The evidence that I have gathered through *entirely original research* performed in Roger Patterson's haunting grounds, which I present here, challenges head-on a worldwide legend. These newly uncovered facts rip asunder the mask of Patterson's Bigfoot. I think you will find the facts shocking. I know I certainly did. Even a talented moviemaker would have a hard time thinking up this story.

The public deserves to hear the full, *factual* story of the Patterson film. I believe very strongly in this, so I have let the exact words of those who *know* the story speak for themselves. I retain throughout the book the local dialect, inflection, and syntax of the witnesses wherever possible. These people who knew the infamous Roger Patterson tell it like it was, as best as they remember it. Editing is used only for length and to improve clarity and preserve relevance.

It is difficult to stand up in the midst of the herd and tell the truth as it is, because, in this case, it is an unpleasant, brutal truth. The public *deserves* it. The time for flimflam must end. The full story must be told. The task is even more difficult if you live in Yakima, Washington, and you knew Patterson personally, and you know *who he really was*. It's further compounded if you happen to live in the Pacific Northwest, where the cult of Bigfoot believers and promoters consistently praise and believe in the Roger Patterson film as if it were a religious icon, never wanting to discover the truth.

The fact remains, as this book proves, that the *real truth* has always been waiting to be revealed using basic science, critical thinking, and simple detective work.

As it will be unveiled here, almost no one ever bothered.

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I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Kal K. Korff, one of the world's greatest investigators and writers on claims of the paranormal and alleged unsolved mysteries. It is fair to say that Kal Korff is the most driven, determined, hard-working, passionate, and honest individual I have ever met. Kal is *totally committed* to using science, reason, common sense, and old-fashioned gumshoe detective work to uncover the truth, whatever that truth might be. In the world of uncanny coincidence that I inhabit, I met Kal by "accident" in 1998, and he has consistently shared my enthusiasm for publishing the truth of the Roger Patterson case. More, he has devoted vast amounts of his personal energy, time, resources, and advice under extraordinary self-imposed deadlines to see this book published. Kal, sometimes I don't know how you can sustain that level of intensity and that indomitable will and that ever-burning, brilliant fire of yours. Thank you beyond measure for everything you've done for me. I hope to always be a friend.

I want to extend my appreciation to Robert Kiviat, President of Kiviat Productions, highly recognized for his serious investigations and unique television productions related to paranormal subjects, and for his welcome exposés of claims that are, literally, too incredible to be true. I owe Mr. Kiviat gratitude for his years of hard work in pushing to have the key findings of this book translated into a special TV production slated for 2004. Thank you, Mr. Kiviat, for your honest commitment to telling it as it is.

Finally, I want to thank one of the most precious people in my life, my wife Patricia, who has experienced with me the *true* mysteries of life. Without her unflagging help and dedication in transcribing interviews, organizing and filing materials, and coordinating so much of the practical details of this project, this book would have never been possible. But more than that, she has given me all the love and emotional support to see this project to its conclusion, through the darkest times when all seemed lost. Pat, I love you. You are my best friend and my life.

Oh, and I must thank Bigfoot, for without him, this book would not exist.

1

OCTOBER 20, 1967

I'm goin' to make a million bucks!

—Roger Patterson, October 22, 1967

Roger Patterson was a little man, but he had a big idea. He sat on his little horse on this bright, autumn day as he mulled over his big idea. Alongside him, on a much bigger horse, rode Bob Gimlin, his part-Apache friend. Bob Gimlin was bigger, but the little man was in charge. He always called the shots.

It was early afternoon, October 20, 1967, and the two men were riding up a dirt and gravel logging road. A small pack horse, a rope from its halter tied around Patterson's pommel, sauntered behind the two men's horses. As his small, white horse swayed beneath him, the big idea filled Patterson's mind. It spread its tendrils through him, flowed, whispering into the dark pools of the cancer seeping silently into his bloodstream. Patterson had beaten back the cancer for three years, but today it seemed to be catching up to him. Time was running out. The big idea would have to be born soon.

Patterson's horse snorted, breaking the calm of the warm air. Patterson looked nervously to his right into the woods along the road. To his left, on his muscular gray horse, Gimlin rode. Patterson, a look of desperate fear in his eyes, faced Gimlin. Gimlin saw the tightly drawn, thin lips and the all-too-familiar flicker in Patterson's shadowy eyes. It was the expression that always made Gimlin apprehensive and vigilant. It was the look that worried him, that caused him to question the journey he had come on with this little man.

Patterson looked back into the woods. He thought he could see it there, even among the bright red, gold, and yellow leaves of the alders and willows, deep among the bewildering mass of shedding trees, far back among the entangled branches, the big idea waiting in the darkness and the dark-blue places between the tree trunks. It was the idea that he had dreamed of for years, that he had fleshed out in the early hours of dawn when he woke up in his bed at home. It was the idea that consumed him and ate the precious remnants of his life.

Gimlin knew that Patterson was now submerged in thought, almost in a trance. He reached over and tilted down Patterson's hat to blot out the sun that was turning hot on the little man's face. Then he adjusted his own. Gimlin knew it was from these trancelike states that Patterson's most creative thoughts emerged. Gimlin remembered the many times that Patterson would blink awake from deep daydreams to explain how he would catch one of the creatures. And now, most amazingly, they were actually searching for one that had recently left fresh tracks. Patterson was convinced the creature was here, somewhere not too far off the logging road. But this trip with Patterson into these woods, Gimlin knew, was different. He could see a wilder expression in Patterson's face.

Cold dread draped over Gimlin. Why had he agreed to come here with the little man? Why was he risking his livelihood and his reputation in this pursuit? Clearly, Patterson was a man obsessed. He could see that more clearly now. And he was being pulled into Patterson's obsession, willingly. Gimlin's horse was falling behind Patterson's, and so he flicked his tongue against the back of his teeth, gently clucking at the horse to spur him on to rejoin the little man.

Patterson stared into the forest as the two men's horses ambled up the gravel road. Patterson could sense the big idea in the shadows. It was invisible, but it was huge. If he could see it out there in the woods, it would take up every cell of his brain. It was monstrous, the thing he wanted to see. And it was hairy. Its enormity was fashioned of great muscles sheathed with thick hide and covered with patches of hair, like a moth-eaten fur coat. Its head was massive, shaped like a helmet. Its shoulders were wide, like a football player's. And he knew that it could hide, its prodigious form melting into the ground, completely motionless, covered under piles of brown, dead leaves.

As the men's horses continued up the road with their riders and supplies, Patterson withdrew into his mind. He focused on the images he had artfully fashioned from his own imagination and the words people had told him when they described the creature. He forced the idea to stir to life, like the cancer that had awakened within him after years of remission and false hope. He imagined the idea on all fours. Its thighs were tightening. It was preparing to stand erect, like the terror that comes in the night. The fear crawling up the nape of the neck. The softly breathing thing in the dark, open closet. Like the bogeyman, ever approaching.

The ears of Patterson's horse suddenly twitched, and shaking its head, the horse came to a sudden halt. "Whoa!" Gimlin said, pulling up on the reins of his own horse. The two men sat next to each other, motionless astride their horses in the middle of the road.

Then Patterson sat up in his saddle and tilted his head. "Do you hear that, Bob?" he whispered hoarsely. Gimlin felt slightly sick. He knew there was nothing there, but he pretended to listen nonetheless. Patterson gazed into the woods, imagining it rising up now, slowly, as if from a long, eternal sleep, pushing up on its gnarled knuckles. It had been waiting for him, its black, round, cold eyes open and staring as if through the eyeholes of a mask. The eyes did not blink against the dry skin of the leaves concealing its face. Gimlin could see sweat drops beading Patterson's forehead, and the little man's eyes began rapidly flitting as he keenly scanned the woods. Patterson was searching for the signs in the vine maple, for the telltale broken tree branches, for the bruised disturbance that marked the thing's passage. Behind him, the pack horse complained. Patterson blinked awake and turned his face to Gimlin. "Let's go," he said.

For the past six days, the two men had been searching, either on horseback or in Gimlin's Chevrolet truck. They had driven the truck to a spot near Bluff Creek in the wild Six Rivers National Forest in the far reaches of Northern California where they had off-loaded their horses and set up camp. Every day they looked for tracks near the creek bed or next to the logging roads after the bulldozers were silent and the workers had gone home. Here they were now, riding north on the east side of Bluff Creek. Patterson wanted desperately to see one. He ached to hear the creature make its presence known by ripping the autumn silence with a defiant, piercing scream.

He handed his sixteen-millimeter camera to Gimlin. "Here," he ordered, "take some film of me." Gimlin shot a short sequence of Patterson as he rode his little horse into the stony bed of the creek, the pack horse in tow. The water in the creek was low. Two years earlier, floods had washed out the creek. Signs of the flood's violence were scattered across the expanses of sandy soil—dead tree trunks, broken branches, dislodged boulders. Patterson and Gimlin had been here at this spot two days before, their horses' hoof marks still visible in the sand bars. Patterson rode back up the embankment, and Gimlin handed the camera back.

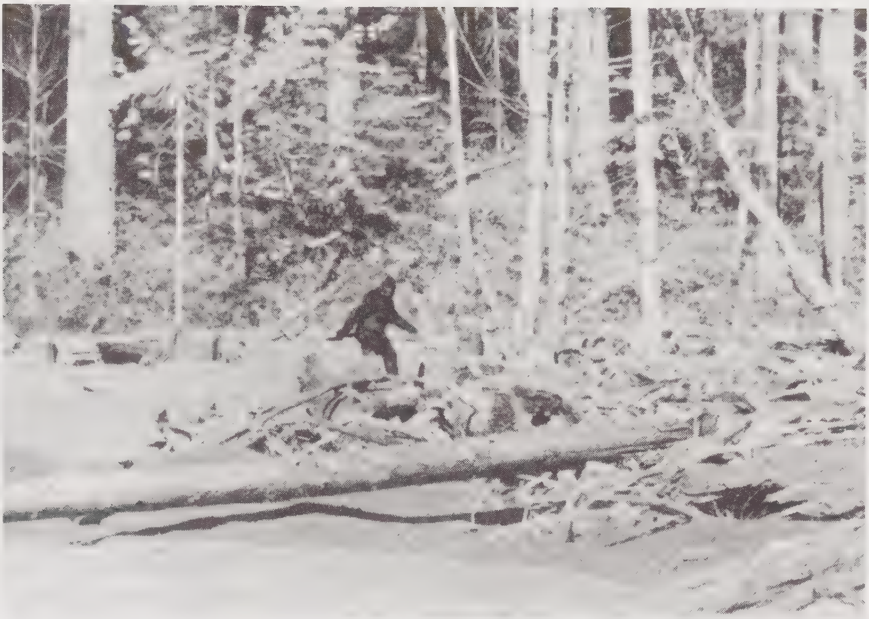
As the two men proceeded, Patterson's face fell back into its abstract stare. He was imagining the creature walking now with long, purposeful steps. In his mind, it was silently moving through the trees alongside the road just ahead, moving fleetingly from tree trunk to tree trunk, hiding behind them, then running to the next tree when Patterson looked away. It was a padding colossus barely disturbing the branches. It was a nature spirit that was one with the trees. Up ahead, Gimlin saw a huge jumble of fallen trees stripped of their leaves. One hundred feet in length, the logjam, almost in the center of the stream bed, marked the turn of the bend in the creek, and the snarled, black roots of an immense, rotting trunk snaked forth in a clutching grasp. Gimlin could see sweat blotting the back of Patterson's red and white checkered shirt. He felt the sun on his own back as well. "Come on, boy," he cajoled his horse, which was slowing for some reason as the two men neared the logjam.

As the men reached the logjam, a fetid odor suddenly filled the air. Patterson snapped out of his daydream as the odor reached his nostrils. The sickly smell was everywhere, like a thick, oppressive blanket. Patterson owned farm animals, and this stench reminded him of cow manure, but more—cow manure and a wet dog, that was it, like a wet dog rolling in cow manure. Puzzled, the men looked at each other. They spurred their reluctant horses around the bend in the creek and passed the logjam. Suddenly afraid, the horses balked and stopped, and the two men gasped to see, rising up on the other side of the creek, near the water's edge, a stupendous figure, dark and ominous. The overbearing figure stood fully erect and stared hard at the puny little man on his little white horse ninety feet away. Patterson's horse whinnied and reared. He pulled on the reins to control it, but the horse was falling, and the two of them went down together. Patterson felt a sharp pang in his right foot as the horse fell on his stirrup. He freed himself, and the horse scrambled up. He stood up shakily and grabbed the reins. He held the skittish animal as he fumbled open the flap of his saddlebags. He yanked out the camera, shouting, "Cover me!" When he let loose of the reins, the horse bolted away.

All the while, Gimlin, suddenly alert, was watching helplessly from his horse. Now, fully erect and facing the men, the creature looked to be huge, an oversized man, but dark, very dark. When Patterson had shouted, "Cover me!" Gimlin's horse reared, and impulsively Gimlin had reached down and grasped the butt of his 30.06 Remington rifle resting in its scabbard. Meanwhile, Patterson was half-running, half-limping, the camera held up to his eye. He sloshed through the shallow water, half-stumbled onto a sandbar, holding the camera in front of his right eye in a desperate attempt to keep the retreating creature in his sights. At the sandbar, he slipped and fell. Behind him, Gimlin was losing control of his own horse, and he quickly dismounted to pull tighter on the reins. The horse was quick, though; it bolted, running around the logjam, and vanished. Gimlin turned toward the creek, resigned to what Patterson, now advancing again, might instruct him to do. His rifle in one hand, he began walking through the water, eyeing the massive, two-legged creature all the while. When he reached the sand bar, he stood and watched the imposing, hairy form walking away, to the north. The creature looked powerful, so powerful it was unbelievable.

Patterson was now running, while trying to hold the creature in the viewfinder. Even as he ran, his heart pounding, he forced himself to look for any features that he could fasten on and absorb. The creature appeared to be human, but it was oversized, at least six foot six inches tall and broadly built. The dark, bipedal form was ambling at a brisk gait, but not running.

Patterson kept moving forward, struggling to keep the camera steady. The long arms of the creature seemed to hang to its knees, and it had an odd, loose-kneed walk. It was moving quickly, but calmly, with an air of confidence and focused determination. As the feet of the creature lifted behind it, Patterson glimpsed the flash of pinkish soles. Then, in what he sensed was his best position, he stopped and concentrated on steadying the camera and panning to the right to follow the creature's movement. At this moment, the creature—as if aware of the photographer, or perhaps hearing the sound of the camera—turned and shot a glance at him. At that moment, Patterson detected something roundish and heavy swaying on the creature's chest. Breasts, the thing had breasts! He caught a glimpse of the creature's face; it was dark and glowering, and Patterson



Roger Patterson's "Bigfoot" (frame 352 of the film).

saw under the thick, right brow of the face a beady, dark-brown eye. Then, the head swiveled back, and the creature walked on.

All the while, Gimlin stood frozen, paralyzed with fear, and awestruck, the strange, oppressive odor hanging over him. With the rifle at his side, he had watched Patterson pursue the creature. They had talked many times about what they should do, as a team, if they finally discovered one of them. They would not shoot, that they had agreed on. They had earned a quiet respect for the creature despite the fact that they had never seen it. The many stories that they had heard and the tracks that Patterson had found over the years had convinced them that—despite the immense size of the creature, its often threatening behavior, its strength, its awe-inspiring cry, and its fearsome tread—it was at heart a shy and lonesome being. It was a natural offspring of the woods; a dark wayfarer that traveled and roamed in consonance with an unknown rhythm of nature; a nomadic wanderer in search of a home it had lost or could never permanently build; a creature ripped from the source of its creation and longing to reunite with it; a living, breathing apelike man or manlike ape that often stumbled without purpose or cause onto civilization, and when coming in contact with humans, either on lonely roads, on far-flung farm lands, or by accident, face-to-face with hunters or hikers, retreated just as stealthily back into the immense safety of the forests. It was an innocent that did not deserve to die, for if it had a soul, it was pure and undeserving of murder at the hands of men. And so Gimlin had stood and watched, his rifle held loosely in his right hand. Now he noticed the head of the creature; it was peaked with a steep, slanting forehead, and the head sat nearly on the shoulders, for now he could clearly see that the creature had no visible neck. The bulky head turned, glanced at the little man, and then the creature strode on in a fluid motion, its long arms swinging at its sides.

The creature was moving steadily away, Patterson could see, so he kept filming, tracking its retreat. As it began to vanish behind trees, its back to the camera, he dashed after it, jumping over logs and skirting brush. The creature was momentarily blocked by a thicket, and then it emerged, its back still to the camera, leisurely walking. The creature turned right as it crossed over the low creek, and headed across the old logging road that ran along the stream bed. It grew smaller as it moved further away, and then *click-click-click-click!* The camera ran out of film. Patterson dropped the camera from his eye and blinked. He had got it on film!

Far behind him, Gimlin turned slowly and looked for his horse. When he finally found it on the other side of the logjam, he seized its reins, mounted, and rode hard along the creek bed. He could now see that the creature was quite some distance down the logging road. It was vanishing around a bend. He glimpsed it one final time, and then it was gone! Meanwhile, Patterson was shouting for his partner to return: "Get on back here!" Gimlin drew his horse up short. He would obey the little man, but he was also afraid. What if the creature was part of a family or a tribe, and it was returning to warn them? He wheeled his horse around and galloped back.

Meanwhile, Patterson was prancing and waving the camera above his head. "We finally got one of 'em!" he whooped as his partner rode up. "Hot dawg!" Gimlin looked warily back toward where the creature had gone. "Incredible," he said softly. "That was the most incredible thing I ever seen."

The little man laughed and danced and laughed again. "We got one of those goddamn sons-a-bitches!" And then: "Shit, I'm out of film! We got to get shots of the tracks. Shit, where's the horses?"

The two men searched the area on foot. They found the little horse and the pack horse to the south. While they gathered them up, they talked rapidly about what they must now do. When they returned with the animals to the site of the filming, Patterson took down a piece of heavy canvas that was rolled up behind the saddle of his horse and threw it over a bush to form a canopy. Inside, in the dark, he changed the roll of film.

With a fresh roll in the camera, Patterson filmed the creature's tracks on the sand bar. Gimlin walked alongside the tracks as Patterson filmed his progress. The men noted that neither of their boot prints sank to the depth of the tracks. Then, Gimlin slowly walked his horse next to the tracks. He turned to Patterson and said, "With the saddle and tack, the horse must weigh fourteen hundred pounds." Yet, the men could see that the horse's prints were barely half the depth of the creature's tracks. Patterson then directed Gimlin to climb onto a tree stump that was near the creature's tracks and to jump down on one heel. Kneeling, the two men saw that the heel print from his cowboy boot was not quite as deep as the creature's footprint. So, they concluded, it took a great deal of weight to create the strange tracks they were seeing.

When they measured them, Patterson whistled. "Fourteen and a half inches long!" The men then stretched out the tape to measure the distance between the strides. They were stunned: the distance from the back of the heel of the left foot to the back of the heel of the right foot was forty-two inches. Patterson cursed, "Shit, we should have brung the plaster!" Determined to get all the evidence they could, the two men rode back to the truck at their base camp and retrieved the plaster of Paris and utensils.

Back at the site, the men mixed the plaster with water and poured two casts, one of the right foot of the creature, the other of the left. After the plaster dried, the men carefully packed the casts, then mounted up and rode up the creek bed. The tracks on the sand bar had turned to scuff marks at the roadside. They dismounted and measured the distance between several of the marks. This time the stride was between fifty-six and sixty-one inches. "She musta started runnin' here," Patterson concluded.

They could follow the marks only about one hundred fifty feet, and it was a mile later that Gimlin found a partial heel mark along the creek. He crossed Bluff Creek and found a wet track on a rock on the other side. Encouraged, he left Patterson behind and began riding over terrain that grew uneven, then grew steep, and then was transformed into a looming mountainside covered with confused brush, heavy timber, carpets of fern, and boulders. After about two hundred feet of hiking the mountainside on foot, he turned back and rejoined his partner.

Still excited, the two men hurried back to the film site and drank in the amazing detail of the creature's tracks one more time. Finally, they unhitched their pack horse and started back to their base camp. They secured their horses before driving the twenty-five miles south to the little town of Willow Creek. Arriving a little after 6:00 P.M., the little man used a pay booth to telephone Al Hodgson, the local Bigfoot hunter. Patterson knew that Hodgson would want to be the first to hear the news. Hodgson owned the hardware store in Willow Creek, and he had just locked up and gone home to have dinner with his wife. When he heard the news from Patterson, he pushed his uneaten plate of food away from him and rushed to the store. When he pulled up in front, Patterson ran up to his car and blurted excitedly, "Al, I took a picture of one of those sons-a bitches!"

"No!" Hodgson said, flabbergasted.

Hodgson got out of his car and during the next half hour, while the three men stood on the sidewalk in front of the store, Patterson recounted what had happened. He showed the store owner the stirrup, bent by his horse when it fell. All the while, Gimlin stayed in the background and remained very quiet. "Well, Al, we're goin' to get somethin' to eat," said Patterson.

After eating, the two men then drove forty-one miles west to Arcata on the coast, where Patterson telephoned his brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, in Yakima, Washington. He told DeAtley the whole story, too, and then took the precious film, which he prayed to God had successfully recorded images of the strange creature, to the local airport and put it on a plane bound for Yakima. Then the two men drove nine miles south to the offices of the Humboldt County *Times Standard* in Eureka. A reporter was still working late. Breathlessly, the little man told the story yet again.

Afterward, Patterson and Gimlin drove the hundred miles back to their base camp. It was well after midnight, but Patterson was still high from the day's incredible events, and he kept his partner up for hours talking on and on. They got only a few hours sleep. Then it started raining. Gimlin woke up Patterson, who was sleeping inside a pup tent. Dazed, Patterson crawled out. It was pouring now. "We'd better get the tracks covered!" Patterson cried out hoarsely. Gimlin picked up some cardboard boxes that had carried supplies, but they were already soggy. He saddled up and rode by himself as quickly as he could in the half-light back to the site where he tore bark off trees to cover up the tracks as best he could.

When Gimlin returned to the base camp, Bluff Creek was raging. The two men had unwisely parked the truck on the east side of the creek; the depth of the water had only been half a foot, but now the creek had widened from six feet to twelve feet, and the rushing water was four feet deep. "We got to get out of here, now!" Patterson yelled, blinking back the water pouring off his head. He had torn down the camp in Gimlin's absence, and after the two men loaded Gimlin's horse in the truck along with the rest of the gear, they leaped into the cab, their clothes soaked. The truck barely made it through the raging flood. It lurched up the road and stalled, bogged down in mud. Shouting at each other over the storm, the men slogged up the muddy incline and found a bulldozer with keys in its ignition. They strapped on a logging cable and hook, attached it to their vehicle, and pulled the truck to safety.

As the gray light of morning flooded the sky, revealing the dark underbelly of the rain clouds, the wet, shivering men started north, toward Yakima, and home.

That evening—October 21, 1967—readers throughout Humboldt County and into southern Oregon opened their Saturday edition of the *Times Standard* and read the headline: "Mrs. Bigfoot Is Filmed!"

"A Yakima, Wash., man and his Indian tracking aide came out of the wilds of northern Humboldt county yesterday to breathlessly report that they had seen and taken motion pictures of 'a giant humanoid creature.' In colloquial words—they have seen 'Bigfoot!'"

The Yakima man had been looking for Bigfoot for eight years, wrote the reporter, his Indian partner for only a year.

Patterson and Gimlin drove as fast as they could to Yakima. When they reached home, Bob Gimlin was exhausted—and feeling uneasy. He was grim-faced and tortured with regret when he said goodbye to Patterson, who was babbling nonstop like a madman. Gimlin drove his truck home and collapsed into a restless sleep.

The next day, Sunday, October 22, 1967, only forty-eight hours after he had shot the film, Patterson stood in front of a movie screen in the home of Al DeAtley, his brother-in-law. They spoke to each other in hushed tones. Then they asked three Bigfoot hunters, waiting in the next room, to join them. The hunters had traveled all the way to Yakima from Canada and California. DeAtley started the film, and as the colored images leaped onto the screen, the little man started talking a mile a minute, his arms and hands waving, telling the group in vivid detail everything he had seen and smelled and felt and remembered.

Late that evening, alone, at his home on the South Fork of the Ahtanum Road in Tampico, Washington, west of Yakima, Patterson stood in front of a mirror and picked up his black cowboy hat. He wore a clean, black shirt and fresh, black jeans and a bright, silver belt buckle. He was ready to go out on the town. At the tavern maybe he'd sing; he knew he would talk. He tapped the hat onto his head and set it neatly in place and ran his bony fingers along the rim. He adjusted the string tie at his neck, and a huge grin swept across his gaunt face reflected in the mirror. Deathly black shadows ringed his sunken eyes, alive now with licking flames. "I'm goin' to make a million bucks!"

And that's the way the story stood since October 20, 1967—that is, until now.

2

THE INVESTIGATION BEGINS

Those who knew him, to those who knew him well, from his business to social life, considered Patterson "shady."

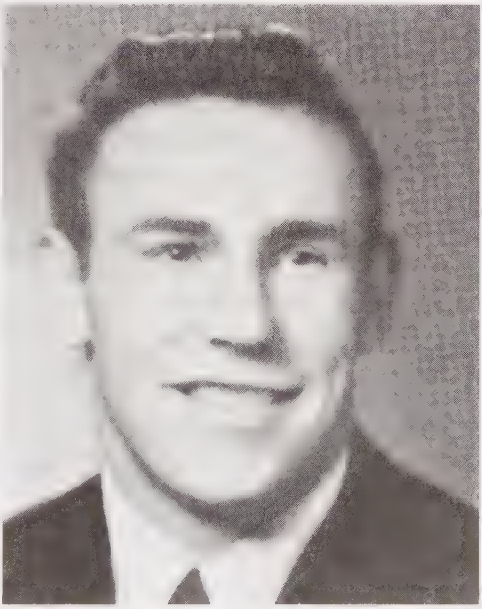
—**Danny Perez, self-styled Bigfoot hunter**

Roger Patterson . . . had a varied career around the fringes of show business.

—**John Napier, primatologist**

For me, it began nearly thirty years later in the fall of 1995 when I found myself sitting on a barstool in the country kitchen of a building contractor's house located just off Ahtanum Road west of Yakima, Washington.

I'd been interested in Pacific Northwest mysteries for twenty-five years. Starting in 1978, I began driving on weekends to the Yakama Indian Reservation just south of Yakima to investigate reports of unexplained nocturnal lights. For years my fascination with the strange, orange orbs drew me back to the reservation. I interviewed dozens of witnesses—fire lookouts, policemen, and ranchers—and eventually wrote a book on their sightings. On this particular



Roger Patterson, age eighteen. Source: Yakima High School Lolomi Annual, 1951. Courtesy of Wayne Willis.

billowy, late summer morning, after interviewing the contractor about his own experiences with the lights, he offhandedly said, "You know, Roger Patterson lived out in this area."

"He did?" I hadn't been thinking of Roger Patterson, but I always imagined his presence whenever I drove into Yakima. I felt a certain kinship with him: my birthday is October 20, the same date he supposedly shot his film of Bigfoot. Whenever I thought of Patterson, I reminded myself that, while he was in Northern California whooping up his discovery, I was celebrating my twenty-first birthday in a blue-lit nightclub in San Diego.

"Yep, right up the road," he drawled. "And he was a liar." He calmly wrapped his worn workman's hands around his coffee mug.

The contractor's statement startled me. To my knowledge, no one had ever called Patterson a liar. Besides, the famous film, which I dimly remembered seeing somewhere, was considered the best evidence of Bigfoot's existence—wasn't it? My imaginary kinship with Patterson welled up inside me. For some inexplicable reason, I respected him. Was it because he had lived in an area to which I was attracted because of its paranormal lore?

"Patterson was a liar?" I asked, skeptical.

"Yep. Common knowledge around here." The spider web of wrinkles around his eyes tightened as he grinned.

I didn't know what to make of the contractor's claim. Could he be right? Occasionally, I had toyed with the idea of looking into Patterson's famous film. Some of the Yakama Indians had related stories of Bigfoot sightings on the reservation. As a Northwest resident, I had also bought old Bigfoot books and clipped out newspaper stories for my files, although I kept my focus on my major interest, UFOs.

"Well, that's interesting," I said.

"Oh, yes, just up the road, on the South Fork of the Ahtanum." The contractor named a man who had known Patterson.

"Would he would be willing to talk to me?" I asked. It might be an interesting conversation, even if nothing useful came out of it.

"Sure. Hon', what's her phone number?"

In a few minutes, my first of what would become a long line of witnesses was on the phone, and I was quickly scribbling notes from an informant who immediately requested anonymity. "Oh, yes, him," she said. "I remember the day Roger came by wantin' to borrow my Siamese cat. I could see he had some friends out front. Grown men, behavin' like boys! One was dressed like a cowboy, and there was another dressed like an Indian sittin' in a truck."

Slowly a memory surfaced. I remembered reading that a Bob Gimlin was with Patterson when he filmed the famous Bigfoot. Gimlin was part Apache. Could this have been Gimlin in Indian clothing sitting outside in the truck? Odd, though. Indians usually wore tribal regalia only in ceremonies.

"As if they were in costume?" I asked. The contractor squinted his eyes as he listened in.

"Uh-huh. And Roger came inside and said he wanted to borrow my cat. Well, I wasn't about to give him my cat."

"And why not?"

The silence on the other end was drawn out, like a long furrow waiting for planting. The contractor picked up a piece of toast and took a bite.

"Why, to let the cat loose, so he could have dogs chase it. He was makin' a movie. And he wanted to have a scene where the dogs were chasin' Bigfoot, but it would really be my cat they were chasin'. Well, I told him, 'Roger, you're not going to borrow my cat!'"

"And so he left?"

"Yep." Then she added: "Roger liked to walk up my steps on his hands."

I laughed. The statement rang with the kind of matter-of-factness you hear in the country where hardworking ranchers are accustomed to most everything, especially the tribulations of unpredictable weather. I pictured a man mounting wooden steps on his hands, his boots pointing to heaven, his face turning red with the rush of blood. And today he had come to borrow a Siamese cat. It was very funny, I thought, but also awfully ridiculous behavior for a famous Bigfoot hunter.

"He was a show-off," my informant said. "No! I was *not* goin' to give my cat to that Roger Patterson."

I thanked her and hung up. The contractor wiped a napkin across the butter on his mouth and smiled whimsically.

I drained the last of my coffee.

"You know," the contractor said, almost as an afterthought, "Patterson was involved in what's called the ghost town."

"The ghost town?" I stared at him, perplexed.

"It's right up here on Ahtanum Road near Lynch Lane." His steel-blue eyes squinted as he pointed at the window with a calloused hand. "That's something you might want to have a look at. Lots of history around here."

It would be a few months later before I returned to the Ahtanum Valley, but I searched for and found the remnants of the ghost town. There wasn't much left, only a few gray, weather-beaten buildings out in a field.

I approached the door of a long, cinder-block house that faced the field and the dilapidated structures. A small, mild-mannered man answered the door bell. He identified himself as Mike Fairchild, a retired Air Force pilot and former safety officer for the Washington Department of Transportation. "Oh, yes, there used to be a complete western town over there," he said, pointing. "It was a mess when I bought this house. I've been cleaning it up over the years. Every once in a while I get calls about the town. Jerry Merritt built it. He's in Vancouver now. Merritt and Patterson had their Bigfoot headquarters here."

Jerry Merritt? A western town? Bigfoot headquarters? Was there more to the Roger Patterson story than just Patterson and Gimlin getting lucky with a camera? I felt an urge to get in contact immediately with this Jerry Merritt. But first, I needed a crash course on Bigfoot and whatever was written about Patterson.

Klamath River, Six Rivers National Forest, Northern California. Photo by Greg Long.

Back home, in the yellowing pages of my Bigfoot books, I discovered a map of Bluff Creek in Northern California. It was here that the modern phenomenon of Bigfoot began long before Patterson made his name. The creek, I discovered, feeds into the Klamath River northeast of the town of Weitchpec (pronounced WECH-UH-PECK) on the Hoopa Indian Reservation. One can reach the creek on logging roads off Highway 96, which runs north-south through the dense Six Rivers National Forest.

In the summer of 1958, Highway 96 was a one-lane, mostly unpaved road crawling warily through thick, uninhabited forest. Back then, Bluff Creek was virtually unknown to the outside world. It was the perfect place for Bigfoot.

The way the Bigfoot investigators—or Bigfooters, as they call themselves—told it, in the summer of 1958 a construction crew was building a logging road twenty miles north of the Klamath River. The road was supposed to be wider and better than most of the logging roads in the area and would run close to the bottom of the Bluff Creek valley. A hard-eyed catskinner named Jerry Crew was managing the construction crew. On the morning of August 27, 1958, he was returning to his earth-moving equipment to start another day's work. Something out of place on the road attracted his eye. He knelt and inspected the find—huge, flat-footed, human-looking footprints with stubby toes. He measured the tracks. They were

Bluff Creek, looking northerly from the Bluff Creek bridge on Highway 96, Six Rivers National Forest, Northern California. Photo by Greg Long.

sixteen inches long, seven inches wide at the ball of the foot, and two inches wide at the heel. The tracks were pressed two inches deep into the ground. An ordinary footprint could penetrate only half an inch. The average distance between impressions was over four feet, far longer than a normal human's. Crew alerted his men, and in the ensuing weeks, the tracks began appearing again and again, always overnight. The tracks usually came down from the hillside and crossed the road, heading toward Bluff Creek.

Jerry Crew knew Bob Titmus, a taxidermist in Anderson, California. An animal enthusiast long interested in strange footprints appearing in the region, Titmus told Crew how to make a plaster cast of one of the mysterious tracks.

On Friday, October 1, 1958, Crew discovered fresh tracks traveling a quarter of a mile along the road. Crew made a cast of one, and that weekend, he took the cast to the offices of the Humboldt *Times Standard* in Eureka. A reporter interviewed him and took his picture holding the cast.

On October 6, 1958, the *Times Standard* ran the Jerry Crew interview. The story, entitled "New 'Sasquatch' Found—It's Called Bigfoot," was placed on the Associated Press wires, where it immediately shot into news rooms around the country. For two days, the *Times Standard* was inundated with phone calls from

[redacted]

newspapers, radio, and university scholars. Thus, "Bigfoot" was born. The *Times Standard*'s Andrew Genzoli wrote, "Bigfoot now enters the realm of the Flying Saucers, the Little Men from Mars, the giants on Mount Shasta, the never-dying parade of the mysterious. . . ."

My Bigfoot books informed me that the terms *sasquatch* and *Bigfoot* mean the same thing. According to scholars, the natives of the Lower Fraser River in British Columbia, Canada, believed in Sasahevas, which means "hairy men." Sasahevas was corrupted by white European settlers into "sasquatch." Other scholars said that sasquatch was derived from the Pacific Northwest coast Salish Indians' "See'atco," or "One Who Runs and Hides." Other North American Indian tribes share a similar belief in hairy men. For example, the Chinook of Oregon speak reverently of Skookum, or "Evil God of the Woods." The Karoks of California talk about Madukarahat, or "Giant."

Whether "Bigfoot" or "sasquatch," the Bluff Creek area quickly became the haunting grounds for a group of young Bigfooters. They had been interested in the alleged creature long before 1958. John Green was one of the Bigfooters. Growing up in Vancouver, Green avidly read sasquatch articles in the local papers. Written by J. W. Burns, a British Columbia school teacher who lived on the Chehalis Indian Reserve next to the Harrison River, the stories featured Indian encounters with hairy giants. In 1927, when a major national magazine published one of Burns's stories, "sasquatch" became a household word in British Columbia. Regionally, popular interest in sasquatch grew.

In 1954, after a stint as a journalist in Toronto, Green bought the *Agassiz-Harrison Advance*. Green ran an April Fool's Day story in his newspaper in 1955. The story was about a beautiful female guest at the Harrison Hot Springs Hotel who was carried off into the mountains by a hairy monster. Soon after, Green was visited by Rene Dahinden, an immigrant from Switzerland. Dahinden, while working on a farm in Alberta, had become a budding sasquatch enthusiast. Dahinden was hoping Green would provide him information that would lead to a genuine sasquatch. "His visit made a good story," Green wrote nearly twenty-five years later in his book *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*, "but I felt rather sorry for him."[1] A skeptical journalist, Green was hardly convinced of the existence of the creature.

Then, in 1958 Green saw Jerry Crew's picture in a Vancouver paper holding his sasquatch cast. He was stunned. Maybe Dahinden was onto something. Green had in his possession a sketch of a Bigfoot cast drawn by the family of a dead Washington state sheriff. Comparing the sketch to the image of Crew's cast, Green convinced himself they were one and the same. However flimsy the comparative evidence, Green and his wife rushed down to Bluff Creek. When they arrived, most of the publicized tracks were gone, although Green saw a few which he considered "very impressive." He did meet Crew, and on the way home, Titmus. Back home, Green concluded that the same type of sasquatch roaming in British Columbia was also at Bluff Creek.

A few weeks later Titmus and a friend, Ed Patrick, found fresh tracks sunk an inch deep into a sand bar near the end of the Bluff Creek Road. "Something had made the tracks, and it had to be either a man with a machine or an animal," declared Green.[2]

In the fall of 1959, Dahinden got an itching to look for Bigfoot at Bluff Creek, and he convinced Green to accompany him. They saw tracks, found once again by Titmus. The tracks were like those Green had seen earlier. During this trip, negotiations involving Green, Dahinden, Titmus, a naturalist named Ivan Sanderson, and a San Antonio millionaire named Tom Slick began in earnest to form a Bigfoot expedition. Slick would finance it, as he had several other expeditions to discover the abominable snowman, or yeti, in Nepal. A few weeks later, Slick's Pacific Northwest Expedition was born.

In late 1959, Slick invited Peter Byrne, an Irish-born big game hunter, to travel to the United States to take over the Pacific Northwest Expedition. Interested in the yeti since 1948, Byrne had traveled with Slick on yeti expeditions in 1957, 1958, and 1959.

The Pacific Northwest Expedition soon flopped. However, Green felt some useful things were learned, "one of which was that the average sasquatch hunter is so pig-headed that two of them together are pretty sure to have a falling out before long." The final blow to the expedition occurred on October 6, 1962, when Slick perished in a plane crash.

In the summer of 1967 Green got wind of new Bigfoot tracks at Bluff Creek. Crew's road was now open, and speculation was that Bigfoot was curious about the logging operations. In August, Green and two Canadians drove down to Bluff Creek. They found familiar Bigfoot tracks, and a *new* track, thirteen inches long, not seen before. On this trip, Green met Al Hodgson, the owner of the Willow Creek Variety Store who, Green learned, had been casting Bigfoot tracks since 1961.

The morning after Green returned home to Harrison Hot Springs, a local called from Bluff Creek: "What you're looking for is here." With $500 donated by the *Vancouver Sun*, Green and Dahinden chartered a plane and raced to Bluff Creek. They found a thousand tracks covering over six hundred yards of the road, although traffic had wiped out half of the tracks.

The remaining tracks were fragile, but Green was convinced they were from a sasquatch. "To have shaped a thousand tracks by hand in that brief period and in the dark," he said, "would be impossible many times over." However, Green admitted, "It probably will never be possible to rule out entirely the possibility that tracks are faked. There have been a lot of attempts to imitate them, and some have fooled people for a time. There are almost certainly other fakes that have not been detected."

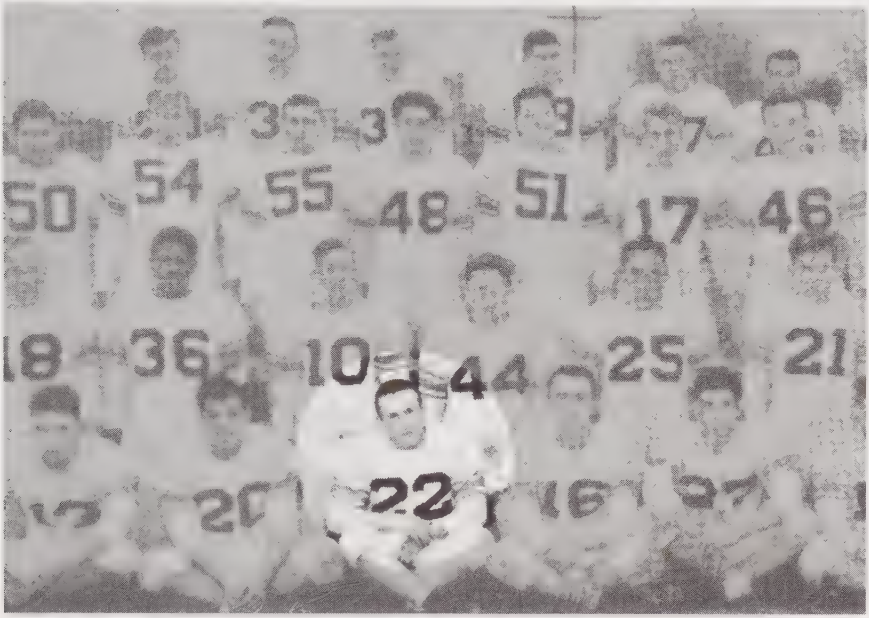
Green went on to muse, "There is one thing really strange about the 'Bigfoot' situation at Bluff Creek, and that is the fact that so many tracks showed up in the one locality. Tracks are generally seen so seldom that one has to assume that if these creatures are real they must be in the habit of avoiding places where their tracks will show." And why, Green scratched his head, were tracks from "two different individuals" and "several others" showing up? And why had no one credible reported actually *seeing* a Bigfoot making the tracks? Why, the nascent Bigfoot field pondered, was this fugitive creature Bigfoot constantly leaving so many tracks in *one place*?

Since 1958 Bluff Creek had become "Bigfoot Central," the mecca for Bigfooters. It was the *happening* place, where you could stumble upon evidence, maybe even see a real Bigfoot! Interestingly, Green noted, a young novice Bigfooter had traveled to Bluff Creek in 1964 and casted a single track. That young novice was none other than Roger Patterson of Yakima, Washington. On October 20, 1967, like lightning striking out of the blue, Patterson rode out of Bluff Creek with the first film evidence of Bigfoot. Miraculously, with only one cast under his belt, he had achieved the impossible—right after Green and Dahinden, who had been searching for Bigfoot for *nearly fifteen years*, had returned to Canada, empty handed.

With my research on the birth of the Bigfoot subject completed, I asked myself, What about Patterson and his film? I collected all the facts from my moldering Bigfoot literature. I learned that Patterson's footage was cropped from a one-hundred-foot roll of Kodachrome II color film. The Bigfoot sequence measured only twenty-three feet, nine and a quarter inches and was composed of 952 frames. The footage lasts a half second short of sixty seconds. Bigfooters compare the Patterson film to the Zapruder film shot on November 22, 1963, which shows in full color and hideous detail the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. But whereas the Patterson and Zapruder films share the same quality of uncanny chance, Patterson's film images are blurry, and the Bigfoot is tiny, indistinct, and continuously retreating from view. The jittery images reflect Patterson's erratic motions as, according to his accounts, he struggled to maintain his subject in the viewfinder. Upon first glance, and even after intensive scrutiny, the film reveals all the characteristics of a home movie.

As far as Patterson's biography, I learned he was born on February 14, 1933, in Walls, South Dakota. He died at thirty-eight of Hodgkin's disease, a form of cancer, on January 15, 1972, in Yakima, where he had lived since childhood. Married, he had three children. From what I could gather, he managed to pack a wide variety of experiences into his short life. He was a football halfback for Yakima Valley College, a boxer in the United States Army while stationed in Germany, and a cowboy and rodeo rider. He claimed to be an inventor, too, and included among his inventions the plastic bread bag clip, which I found dubious. He wrote a book in 1966 entitled *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* A man named Glen Koelling helped Patterson publish it. Then Patterson took the famous October 20, 1967, footage.

Searching further, I discovered several interesting character judgments of him. "Those who knew him, to those who knew him well, from his business to social life, considered Patterson 'shady,'" wrote Danny Perez, a California Big-



Roger Patterson played football at Yakima High School. Source: Yakima High School Lolomi Annual, 1951. Courtesy of Wayne Willis.

footer. "But does this disqualify his film from being genuine? No, it does not."[3] Shady? Here was an interesting word choice.

And John Green had this to say about Patterson eleven years after the film was taken: "He obviously had no money, and was plainly a man given to obsessions, not only about the sasquatch but about horses, health foods and a couple of inventions he was producing." Green added, "He was a small man, though very muscular, and his horses were small, too. He actually had a Volkswagen van rigged up so he could transport two horses in it."[4]

Rene Dahinden described Patterson as an "ex-rodeo cowboy, small time promoter and self-proclaimed seeker of the truth."[5] Small-time promoter? More interesting words.

The intriguing character references began to pile up.

John Napier, a primatologist who took an interest in Patterson's film, wrote shortly before Patterson's death: "Roger Patterson, a very attractive and sincere well-spoken man of about forty, has had a varied career around the fringes of show business."[6]

Shady. Promoter. Very sincere. Well-spoken. On the fringes of show business. It struck me that these were the attributes of a confidence man. And if Patterson

Larry Lund (*left*), the Bigfoot "community's" publicist and archivist, being interviewed by the author. Photo by Pat Long.

was a con artist, perhaps his celebrated film was a hoax. But if it was, how could that be proved?

I closed the books. I now had solid background on the Bigfoot subject and Patterson. The only sources who could help me further were the Bigfooters. I sensed they were secretive and defensive, but if I were to learn more about Patterson, I would have to penetrate their group. I discovered the Western Bigfoot Society in Portland, Oregon. After a few phone calls, I found myself in the basement office of Larry Lund in Vancouver, Washington. I had to duck to avoid smashing my head on the low ceiling of his cramped basement office. I'm 6'8" tall, as big as a Bigfoot, and to avoid puncturing my skull, I quickly lowered myself into a rickety chair to study the many Bigfoot novelties scattered around Lund's musty quarters.

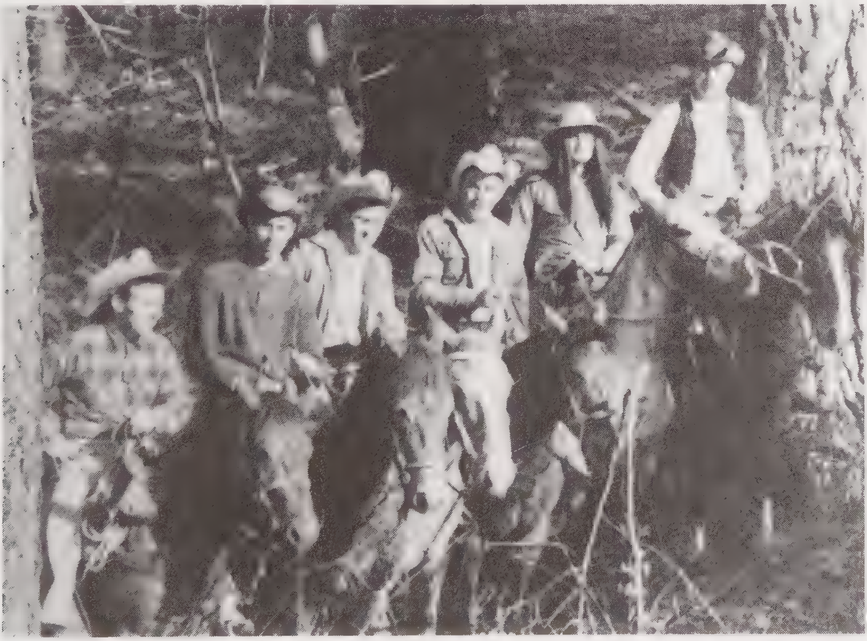
Distinguished by a gleaming crop of smooth, silver hair and a sporty mustache, Lund projected warmth and openness. The patter of his mellow, liquescent voice was that of a salesman. I knew he was considered by Bigfooters as the group's main publicist, and he had been in front of TV cameras many times, trotting out Bigfoot artifacts for eager producers and lobbing forth sound bites composed of high-sounding pronouncements about Bigfoot and Roger Patterson.

Without my prompting, Lund's words turned smoothly to Patterson. "Here's Roger Patterson," he said as he slid forth a notebook from a shelf and opened it to a glossy black-and-white photograph protected under plastic. Frozen forever in an instant of time, Patterson's lean, handsome face stared out as if into a darkened theater empty of admirers. He wore a black, western string tie and a new black cowboy hat, its sides crisply rolled. Clearly, this was a professional shot, a publicity still.

"Here's some buddies Roger hung around with." Lund flipped to another photo. This one showed five cowboys and an Indian on horseback. The horses and their riders were in a row, somewhere amid trees and brush, a country setting. All the riders were looking at the camera, with unremarkable expressions on their faces. Again, the shot looked staged. But for whom? For what? A movie?

Lund pointed to the cowboy on the left. "That's Roger. And," he tapped on the image of the Indian in the photo, "that's Bob Gimlin." I could see that Gimlin played the part well: his black Indian tresses hung to his chest.

Lund's finger alighted on another photo. "This was Roger and Bob Gimlin's horse truck. They carried their horses in the back." The grainy black-and-white revealed an old-fashioned Chevrolet pickup.



The six amateur actors in Roger Patterson's Bigfoot movie. *Left to right:* Roger Patterson, John Ballard, Jerry Merritt, Howard Heironimus, Bob Gimlin, Bob Heironimus, 1967. Courtesy of Jerry Merritt. Copyright © Larry G. Lund.

"Would you like to look at the film?"

I jumped at the offer.

Lund turned on his TV and VCR and pulled a video cassette off a shelf packed with Bigfoot documentaries. I was about to view the "gold standard" of Bigfoot evidence, as the Bigfooters called it—supposedly the one, single item that proved the existence of the legendary creature. Plaster casts existed, as well as a few strands of hair and a handful of audio recordings of alleged "vocalizations" of the creature. But the Patterson film outshone all those scraps of evidence. It put them to shame. The video began to play.

It didn't take long for the footage to put me under its spell. I understood why the film captivated the public. The spasmodic, jerking images of the hairy creature suggest the authentic shock of an uncontrolled event amazingly captured on film by an innocent, totally surprised witness. But there is more that compels the viewer. The creature's motions project a strangely familiar, yet elusive and unachievable idea. The idea points to something that is like us, but not us, both man and ape but actually neither. The ambling, androgynous creature suggests a living, breathing being that is utterly untouchable and free of man and the tyranny of his cities and the prison of his mass communications that shape our perceptions of reality, free from the fear of sudden violence coming from the hands of strangers or from a hidden, unknowable terror, walking away calmly, completely fearless in the face of the two hunters who could shatter its skull in an instant with a well-placed bullet. In the film, the creature is escaping, quietly stepping back inside the woods from which it came. And because it is freely escaping, it is undiscovered, never to be found, catalogued, recorded, numbered, or named. It is a powerful, American image, I thought. It's out-sized. It's strong. It's daring. It's confidence has a touch of sublime arrogance. Its stride and the unfettered backward glance at the camera is distinctly American, as though it were saying, "I don't give a damn. I'll go anywhere I damn well please, when I want, where I want, how I want. I own nature. And I'm free." Yes, I concluded, the creature is pure American freedom.

Truly, I thought as I studied the footage for the fifth time, the film of this utterly free American manape overshadows the dull, plaster-gray boredom of the Bigfoot casts, the photos of the oversized foot impressions, the remnants of scraggly hair, the few dubious sound recordings, the disgusting feces poked at in labs that form the sole body of material evidence for Bigfoot reality. It is quite a show, this big Bigfoot—it isn't cold and immobile like the casts; instead, it's warm and alive, towering in real-life blazing color, standing up and striding proudly in the gold light of day, its arms swinging effortlessly, its majestic feet treading their solemn way into our TV screens. And it is made more believable, I thought, when it is run and rerun, flickering late at night, gliding in swells of eerie intonations and in dark, undercurrents of anxiety and fear, of terrifying attraction and longing for absolute power and total freedom. It's an image that's been burned for nearly four decades again and again into the American consciousness, and into the country's myths, its stories, its sense of self, and its culture.

But is it a real Bigfoot?

I asked Lund to roll the film yet again.

As I watched, I knew I needed to find out who Roger Patterson really was. If he withstood the test of honesty and integrity, then perhaps his film would, too. For no one before Patterson and no one after him had ever duplicated his feat; no one had ever captured a demonstrably real Bigfoot on film. The mythic stature of the film had been kept alive and defended for decades by the repeated declarations of a handful of aging Bigfoot hunters such as Green, Dahinden, and Byrne, the founders of the modern Bigfoot field. It had also been kept alive by the media. There, there, the creature on the film was looking back at me, a quick glance. It was "the look." It was the single, most powerful symbol of all of Bigfoot-dom. It said, "I dare you to follow me. Catch me if you can."

Then and there I declared silently to myself, *I will.*

Turning off the TV, Lund opened a box. "Here. This is Patterson's book. I sell them for Rene Dahinden. He owns the copyright."

I held the book in my hands like a rare gem. A cartoonish drawing of a Neanderthal-looking face adorned the black-and-white cover. "Latest Facts!" a bubble announced under the title: *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* I handed Lund a twenty.

"You know, a guy who you might want to interview is Jerry Lee Merritt," Lund said with a smile, his glossy hair glowing under the light of the basement bulb. "He's a musician in Vancouver. Roger was his good friend. Jerry liked Roger. But he knew what Roger was. He knew he was just a crazy shyster trying to pay his bills by inventin' this and inventin' that. He'll tell you about all kinds of crazy things Roger did." Lund explained that Merritt had been the lead guitarist for Gene Vincent, a famous rockabilly musician in the 1950s and early 1960s. Lund's sister had married Vincent, and Vincent had lived for awhile in Lund's house. Through Vincent, Lund had met Merritt.

Merritt sounded like an intriguing lead, mainly since it suggested Patterson's connection to show business. But when I left Lund with Merritt's phone number in hand, a different investigative strategy began forming in my brain. I felt that I should begin out at Tampico, where Patterson lived most of his life. I remembered that the building contractor had given me another name of someone who had known Patterson. Back at my apartment I started madly rummaging through my notes. The scrap of paper surfaced. Les Johnson. He had lived right near Patterson, up on the far reaches of Ahtanum Road.

Later, I e-mailed Lund and requested that he send me a copy of the men-on-horseback photo, which he readily did.

Because of job commitments and a major change in my life—I married Patricia Jenness who shared my interest in mysteries—it wasn't until the fall of 1998 that I found myself back in the Yakima region. Pat was with me. I had brought along the photo of the six cowboys (one dressed as an Indian), on the off-chance that one day I might show it to someone in Yakima.

We checked into a motel. When an interview with a UFO witness on the Indian reservation failed to materialize, Pat handed me the motel phone book. "It's time," she said.

I knew what she meant.

"Les Johnson?" I asked when a male voice answered. "I understand you knew Roger Patterson."

"Patterson?" He laughed. "Oh, yes! Come on out, and we'll talk. I can even tell you who wore the Bigfoot suit."

Bigfoot suit? I sank back into my chair, my thoughts spinning. Fifteen minutes later, Pat and I were driving west on Ahtanum Road, traveling back into time in an attempt to solve one of the greatest hoaxes of the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Vancouver: Hancock House, Ltd., 1978), p. 49.
2. Ibid., p. 68.
3. Danny Perez, *BigfooTimes*, Center for Bigfoot Studies, October 22, 1992, p. 6.
4. Green, *Sasquatch*, p. 115.
5. Rene Dahinden (as told to Don Hunter), *Sasquatch* (New York: Signet, 1975), p. 124.
6. John Napier, *Bigfoot* (New York: Berkley Medallion Book, 1974), p. 88.

3

THE JOHNSONS

How can you lie to yourself? . . . After the money or recognition, that's fine, except when you go to bed at night.

—Les Johnson

We drove onto Ahtanum Road, heading west out of Yakima toward Tampico. To our left lay the massive, purplish-brown form of Ahtanum Ridge, dark earthquake faults rending its slopes like battle scars; to our right were the southern fringes of Yakima. After passing the Union Gap Fire Station and a smattering of small businesses, we entered the outskirts of the Ahtanum Valley where the land opens up into expansive pastures, farms, ranches, stands of oak trees, and orchards. More fruit trees and more apples, mint, winter pears, and hops are grown in Yakima County than in any other part of the United States.

A lone pickup truck approached and passed. I wondered what it was like in 1967 when Patterson drove on this road. Even in 1997 the population of Yakima was only 64,000.[1] We came upon the little village of Ahtanum, and then two miles further, Wiley City. Soon we drew near Jerry Merritt's ghost town. We slowed to a stop. To our left, a single, gray, wooden building leaned precariously in the yellow grass.

I turned to Pat. "It looks like Mike Fairchild tore down the other buildings," I said sadly. "You know, Merritt's western town might hold the key to the Patterson mystery. We'll have to investigate."

I drove on. Now Ahtanum Road began to rise. To our right, rocky hills formed a natural wall, with houses perched on lone strategic points. Down to the left, half-concealed behind aspen trees, were the wooden buildings of the Ahtanum Mission established by the first French missionaries to the area in 1852, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. There were more farmhouses; then we entered the S curves of The Narrows formed of towering, dark rocks. The sunlight flickered, the air grew cool. We snaked through the treacherous territory and broke free into sprawling farmland. Soon we arrived at a fork in the road that marked the little village of Tampico. We had driven eighteen miles on Ahtanum Road to this spot. At the head of the fork was the Tampico Store; in front were a few empty cars. Catercorner to the store was a fire station. The road on our left was the South Fork of the Ahtanum; the road to the right, the North Fork. We turned right, as Les Johnson had directed. A half mile up, we turned into Tampico Park, a small housing development.

A stocky man wearing large glasses and half bald but still lucky to have a swatch of thinning, gray hair greeted us on the porch deck of his dark-brown, A-frame house. A pair of very large, gray elk horns were affixed below the peak of his house. The grip of Johnson's hand was strong and tight, as if from years of hard labor. A distinct furrow ran up from the bridge of his nose to several inches above his brows. He looked like a man who had also done some tough thinking in his life. He invited us inside, and I read these words burned into a wooden plaque hanging on the wall of the entryway: "Choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Isaiah 24:15."

Johnson wore heavy wool socks and we followed his padding feet into the spacious living room. As he sat down in an easy chair and switched on a lamp, I sensed he was a contented man. As we discovered, he was retired and financially well off. He had recently had a heart operation, but his eyes were still bright. I could see he wanted to talk. We sat down on a nearby sofa.

The yellow glow from the lamp fell softly on him. He looked at us sternly and said with conviction in a soft, raspy voice, "I'm not going to tell you anything I don't believe myself." I edged close and with his permission started the tape recorder.

"It was all pack horses when I came here," he reminisced. That was the late 1940s. Johnson was barely twenty at the time. He was born in Yakima in 1929. "There weren't any roads. It was that transition time between the old days and the new days comin', and the people comin' out here wanted land. The timber was being cut so much the cows couldn't lay down."

Johnson bought 2,300 acres from long-time resident Frank Mondor. Mondor was one of the first Ahtanum Valley pioneers, having moved to the North Fork in 1869. Quite a family of the Mondors were living on the North Fork back in the 1940s. One of Mondor's sons was Willis; and one of Willis's children turned out to be Patricia, who later would marry Roger Patterson. Only six to eight families were living on the North and South Forks when Johnson arrived. Johnson himself married in 1950, and with his thousands of acres went into dairy farming and cattle ranching.

"For the next ten years, we pretty well starved to death tryin' to make a livin'," he frowned. "We had a lot of hay here and a lot of machinery to keep up, and it was tough times."

Johnson and his family worked day and night. He got up at 2:30 every morning to milk the cows, work in the fields, and cut hay, and then collapsed late at night and started all over again. “I wanted to prove to the world I could whoop it,” he smiled, still proud of the terribly hard life. But the work was too much. The Johnsons dropped dairy farming and went into beef. “But we got to the point where we had to give up the cattle business because of the economics of it.” And so Johnson went into land development, and began selling some of his acres. From then on, making a living was easier.

As I surveyed Johnson’s face, it was clear to me he was a serious, hard-working, self-made man, with no time for nonsense. I had read in Patterson’s book that Patterson had interviewed someone who had seen Bigfoot west of Yakima. Perhaps, then, Johnson had seen Bigfoot, or heard of other ranchers who had. “I’ve been in these mountains fifty years, and I haven’t seen anything,” he said curtly.

That statement shifted Johnson’s memories to Roger Patterson. He saw Roger the first time in high school, but Roger was four years younger, and the two boys had no contact. Then, in the late 1960s, Roger moved his family out to the South Fork. He lived near Johnson and among the ranchers, who were devoted to arduous work. “Roger didn’t talk too much to some of us because most of us who run cattle here turned a deaf ear to him when it came to Bigfoot. I had lived here all my life.” His brows wrinkled. “He had never been in these mountains to speak of, you know. He was an implant. You had to earn your way in. It wasn’t easy.”

When Patterson moved out to the South Fork, the normally quiet, conservative atmosphere of the area was punctured by what Johnson called “Roger’s activities.” Johnson didn’t want his children to get involved. “I wanted to keep them clean,” he said, because people in the small community were being attracted to Roger’s belief in Bigfoot. “The cattlemen made fun of it, picked on him to a certain degree, or ignored it. But the cattlemen didn’t belong to Roger’s group.”

Johnson adjusted his glasses with his thumb and finger. He told me that one member of Roger’s group was Prentis Beck. I perked up. I recalled seeing Beck’s name in Patterson’s acknowledgments page in *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?*

“I saw a Bigfoot cast that Prentis had,” continued Johnson. “He kept it under the seat of his pickup. Prentis spun a pretty good story to go with the cast. It’s like everything else in the world, you either believe it or you don’t. I was told that the casts were made from big clown’s feet. They were eighteen inches long.” He squinted. “Someone who ran with that bunch set up something and made some footprints.”

Out of my briefcase I took the photo of the men on horseback. “That’s a long time ago,” Johnson said, peering intently at the photo. He could identify only Patterson.

“Prentis was really talented,” Johnson said. “He could braid ropes, hackamores, and lariats. He was good at that. He built horse-drawn wagons with Roger. The wagons were pulled by six ponies. I remember Roger sittin’ in them, and he drove them to fairs and parades. Prentis was a natural artist. Patterson did some paintin'. Both were talented when it came to that kind of thing."

But when it came to the Bigfoot casts . . . "How can you lie to yourself?" Johnson's eyes were cold and hard. "How can you kid yourself forever? After the money or recognition, that's fine, except when you go to bed at night." He crossed his ankles and leaned back. "You know, you're playing games with yourself. I always wondered, 'How can you guys continually stand up and look people in the face, and you know downright you're not telling it the way it is?'"

Clearly, Patterson and his cowboy buddies had made quite a stir in the small community, and Johnson for one knew they were up to something. "That bunch of young guys," he snorted. "There was stories flyin' around them."

He remembered the day that his twelve-year-old son, Gary, came home, confused. Riding on his horse with friends, he had come upon something strange up on the South Fork where Roger lived, at a spot further up from Roger's house. "Dad, what's wrong with Roger?" Gary said. "They've got raccoon hides tied up in the trees." On the ground were a kettle and a frying pan, and horses were tethered to a tree.

"They had some kind of scene," Johnson said, giving me a sideways glance through his glasses, "like a little movie set kind of thing being set up. They were depicting like they were out in the bush, like they had killed raccoons and skinned them. Some kind of hokey-pokey game was goin' on."

I edged forward to hold the tape recorder closer. To me, at least, it seemed obvious: Roger and his friends were preparing to make a movie.

Johnson's voice turned low and gritty, like sandpaper. "I also remember when I went over to Roger's to borrow some harnesses or to get my kids who were playing with Roger's kids, I saw about eight feet above the ground, in a big tree behind Roger's house, a platform with sides on it, like a grandstand or a half-built tree house with no roof, like a lookout structure. I saw some viewing equipment in it, like a telescope on a tripod, something to look down on the ground." Johnson held an invisible telescope against his eye and pretended to rotate the viewfinder. "A ladder led up to the platform. Roger might have been up in it. I thought, 'You guys will do anything to get your names in the paper!' It was like a playhouse up in a tree. It had something to do with the Bigfoot thing. It was some kind of game they played; I can't remember the game."

What *was* Patterson up to? I wondered. Did he actually believe that from his lookout perch he was going to spot Bigfoot strolling through his backyard? Or was it all for show, as Johnson suggested? In his fifty years riding the countryside, Johnson had never seen Bigfoot. It seemed an odd coincidence that when Patterson moved out to the South Fork Bigfoot sightings suddenly began to be reported.

"That movie," Johnson said hoarsely, "they were s'posed to be in a box canyon in California. But it was shot on the South Fork, two miles up the road, on the left, where you make a bend around a creek, close to the creek area. Back then, the South Fork was just two little ruts in the road."

I was suspicious about the footage of October 20, 1967, given what I had read in the Bigfoot books, especially the hints of Patterson's showmanship. But Johnson's statement about the location of the filming was wrong. Famous Canadian Bigfooter John Green had traveled to Bluff Creek and filmed the exact, same site where the Bigfoot had walked. However, I could see why Johnson had pegged the South Fork as the film site: Patterson was working on a movie; the landscape was similar to that of Northern California; and because he suspected Patterson was up to no good, his son's observation of a movie set had convinced Johnson the footage was shot locally. But there was another reason for Johnson's belief.

"There was an ape suit. Bob Heironimus wore it."

I couldn't speak. Had I found the man who played Bigfoot in Patterson's film? Was the mystery over?

"Bob Heironimus," I finally managed to let out.

"Yep. Bob Heironimus," he repeated with a big grin. "I was in the Idle Hour Tavern in Wiley City. There were fifteen or twenty guys, some of the guys that hung around with Roger. The guys were drinkin' and talkin' about things they had been doin'. Bob Heironimus said that in the back of his Buick—he had a blue Buick—was an ape suit, or a suit. They were talkin' about this suit. Someone said, 'What are you talkin' about?' And someone said, 'Go and look in the back of Bob's Buick.' The guys were teasing each other about it. Everybody in town talked about it. There were lots of guys who sat around and talked about it."

The Idle Hour Tavern in Wiley City was a hangout for cowboys and friends (the tavern still existed in 1999). Photo by Greg Long.

I probed deeper his memories of this event. He recalled that among the onlookers grouped around Heironimus's car were the Ridge Runners, members of a jeep club. Johnson was either walking toward to the tavern or leaving it. "I heard them talkin' when I went by. They were laughin' and gigglin'. They were makin' fun about this suit, like, 'We're going to fool everybody.' I mean, I got that opinion. But you couldn't fool us. We all lived here." He chuckled and then added: "The 'monkey suit' is what they called it. There's four Heironimus boys. Bob. And Bill. Bill worked for me for a while. Then there's Howard and Mike. The Idle Hour Tavern's where we'd go to congregate, lie to each other, and tell these big stories and try to make out like we was somethin'."

I asked, "Do you remember any discussions about Bigfoot, or Bigfoot pranks?"

"All the time."

"Inside the tavern?"

"Everywhere. It was just a hoax to me. And the group that we run with were all cowboys. We were up there in the hills runnin' cows, and you never seen any of those guys up there. It all took place down at the gab station [the Idle Hour Tavern]."

The hullabaloo about Bigfoot occupied the minds of many of the locals. "People were getting interested and were being pulled over to it. Even the younger ones. I believe you can tell people anything, and they'll believe it. It came up around the beer table. We was all talkin'. We all just accepted it as a hoax or a joke. The group I run with all liked to go down there and shoot their wind, too, and object to this thing, and tease these guys, and make fun of it. When it got out of town, nobody knew anything about what we thought."

"Who is this Bob Heironimus?" I peeked at the sprockets of my recorder; thank God, they were still turning.

"Well, I think he works for Pepsi-Cola. He must be gettin' old enough to retire. He apparently carried this thing around in his car for a long time."

"Do you know what Heironimus looks like?"

He thought for a moment. "He had a glass eye. He'd pull it out and put it in his ten cents glass of beer just to make people laugh, as a joke. They'd do anything they could do to get attention."

I questioned Johnson further about Heironimus, but he could supply little else. "Nobody can convince me otherwise—Bob Heironimus was in that suit. We kind of tormented him. If you ever watch Bob walk, he's got the same 'drag' they've got in that picture [Patterson's footage]. He's got a gimp. It's kind of a waddle when he walks. And that was always brought up. 'It walks just like ol' Bob.'"

I took a plunge. "Have you ever heard of Jerry Merritt?"

"Oh, yes. He had a western town. It was quite a show for a while. It looked like a little western town. Only one building is left there now. I saw them draggin' the buildings in. Roger was around Jerry a lot. They thought they could get in the movies."

I readjusted my position on the edge of the sofa. There was that theme again: movie-making. Here in little Yakima, out in the country.

"They had town clowns with six-shooters having quick draws. There would be guys sittin' on the boards as if waitin' for the stagecoach to come in, sittin' there and leanin' back. Oh yes, up to nine guys there. We'd call them 'drug store cowboys.' They knew how to walk up and down the street and get on the back of a horse, but to get on a horse in the mountains was another thing. One guy had a big, handlebar mustache. Some people from Hollywood came and looked at it; but because of the highway and noise, it didn't have anything that appealed to them."

Jerry Merritt, I kept thinking. I couldn't wait to interview him.

"What else do you remember about Roger?" I flipped the tape to the other side.

Johnson took a deep breath. "Well, for twenty-seven and a half years I was the zone chief for Station 4 for the West Valley Fire District. Roger had Hodgkin's disease. He got involved with herbs and natural remedies. He thought that would cure him. We had to put up with that sometimes when we went to help him. He would get congested. He was drowning in his own fluids. It was all over him. Patty Patterson would call the dispatcher, and I'd get a radio call from the dispatcher, 'There's an emergency at the Patterson residence,' and I'd drive over and resuscitate him. I resuscitated him at least four times. I'd clean him out and put in a plastic tube to give him air. He had lost a lot of weight. He'd get bad, then he'd get good. But he never once gave up. He kept saying he was going to make it."

He fell silent for a moment. It must have been grim.

His glanced upward in thought. "He was 5'4" and weighed 130. He was small but tremendously strong. He wore a cowboy hat. He could get on a horse. He was good at rodeo. He rode bulls and horses."

"And he believed in Bigfoot?"

"You could not sway Roger about his belief in this. No matter what you said to him, he would not give to say it wasn't so." He wiggled his toes. "I remember I was in the Westbrook Tavern in West Valley, near Eightieth Street and Wide Hollow. Roger came in and went on about what he had seen. I said, 'Roger, if you ever catch one of them, I'd like to be the first guy to get in a pen with him.' Roger got mad: 'That thing would tear you apart so quick!' I said, 'Well, just put him in a round house so he can't get into a corner on me.' Personally, I knew I wouldn't be in a room with one of them. Roger got angry, really angry."

I pictured Roger, obviously a little man, exploding into a big fury.

"I didn't allow my kids to talk about ghosts," Johnson said sharply. "I was disturbed about Gary being misled. I wanted him to be in these mountains with me, and I didn't want him to have any ghostly ideas. One night when my daughter said she saw a ghost, I said, 'Well, get your clothes on. We're going to go out and find him. I want to see what he looks like.'"

"What do you think Roger did for a living?" I asked. "I mean, besides rodeoing?"

"I don't know what he ever did to make a living."

I thought, So was the movie to serve as his source of income?

"Roger was quite an artist," said Johnson. "He could pretty well build anything. He had some talent if he would have stayed with it. But he was a frivolous man. He was unable to make anything out of his talents."

"Did he show his film footage here locally?"

"Yes. It was shown at the grange in Ahtanum, but I didn't go see it. I saw Roger on television. The shenanigans stopped after Roger died." His lips drew together into a knowing smile.

"Do you know anything about Bob Gimlin, Roger's partner?"

"He had various jobs. Drove a freight truck for awhile, was a security guard at a horse show at the fair grounds." When it came to Bigfoot, Johnson said, "Bob Gimlin led you to believe he believed it. I'm not sure he did. He has a real knack for telling you these things. He might try to convince you it really happened."

"And you never saw any signs of Bigfoot in this area?"

"No, there never was any sign of Bigfoot. And there's a real good reason for that." He crossed his hands behind his head and stared at me, a mischievous look in his eyes, waiting for me to answer.

I let the silence draw out. "Because it doesn't exist?" I said meekly.

"You said that, I didn't!" He broke into laughter.

The interview had wound down. Johnson padded off and returned with a book by Ann Rule, *Dead by Sunset*. Johnson said that Brad Cunningham, the real-life killer in Rule's book, had lived for awhile in Tampico not far from his own home. He had actually met Cunningham, but at the time he didn't know he was a murderer. Johnson's experience with Cunningham was fitting, I thought, as we said good-bye. Just as Johnson had lacked knowledge of Cunnningham, I had for years accepted Patterson's public face, or rather the public face that the media and the Bigfoot community had carefully painted—Roger Patterson, the dedicated Bigfoot hunter who by accident had taken the film of the century. Now I was convinced that Patterson was more than just a lucky rodeo rider.

As Pat and I drove away, I reviewed my findings. Patterson seemed to have had a core of supporters. One of them appeared to be the mysterious Bob Heironimus, and a suit of some type seemed to be involved. Patterson was into moviemaking, and so was another friend, Jerry Merritt. In fact, between Patterson and Merritt, I had the impression that the Ahtanum Valley in the late 1960s was a veritable center of entertainment, which was completely at odds with the values of this conservative ranching community.

And, it seemed, Patterson was attempting to promote the existence of Bigfoot among his neighbors. An additional revelation was Patterson's talents. He appeared to have been an artist, adept at woodworking and other crafts. There was a hint of creativity here, and I was eager to know more.

Before leaving, Johnson had referred me to his children. Back home in Bellevue I soon had Gary Johnson, now forty-four years old, on the phone.

"I'm an engineer," Gary told me with the voice of a mature, competent man. He told me he didn't remember telling his father about Patterson's makeshift movie set. But, if his father remembered, "You can take it to the bank," he said emphatically.

Gary did remember another occasion—inside Patterson's house. Patterson played an audiotape for Gary and Patterson's children, Clint and Sabrina, with whom Gary often rode horses. "Patterson was claiming that these were Bigfoot sounds that he had taken there," Gary said calmly.

"So he was saying that Bigfoot was actually in the local area?"

"Right. He was claiming it was right there in the brush behind the store."

My pulse skipped. That would be incredible; Bigfoot right there in Patterson's neighborhood. "That's the Tampico Store?"

"Right."

Les Johnson had told me that an authentic, western general store built in the nineteenth century once sat at the Y intersection where the South and North Forks joined Ahtanum Road. It was struck by lightning in fall of 1967 and burned to the ground. On its site, the current nondescript convenience store now sits.

"What comes back to me," Gary Johnson said in a composed manner, "is there was a big hubbub one day that they had seen or heard Bigfoot supposedly out behind Roger's, which would have basically been behind the Tampico Store. The tape had on it howling and people hollering and what not, and running through the brush, carrying on."

"What did you think when you heard the tape?"

He reflected for awhile. "As a young impressionable kid . . . I guess I was afraid when I first heard it. I grew up in those hills, and I'd never seen anything. You know, I'm one of those 'show me.'"

I understood. It was certainly odd that Bigfoot showed up in Tampico when Patterson began claiming that Bigfoot existed. It seemed too pat.

Gary continued. "I always felt that Roger was doing this to support his family, and they did well for a little while. They sold a lot of souvenirs and so forth. They were selling T-shirts, and they had them for sale there in the little community store at Tampico." He couldn't remember if the shirts had a slogan on them or not, such as "I've Seen Bigfoot."

Gary remembered the story about Bob Heironimus. "That suit Bob wore was observed in the trunk of a car right outside that famous water hole down there in Wiley City."

Gary went on to reminisce about the Ahtanum Valley. He sketched a picture of a small, isolated, quiet community of people on horseback, gravel roads, cow trails, "a good place to grow up in."

Patterson, he added, was a "small, very well-built man," like the rodeo champ Donnie Gaye.

"Well, thank you very much for your time," I said. Then I called Sandy Johnson, one of Gary's sisters.

In her middle years, Sandy's tone was direct and open, her voice pleasant and friendly. "I used to baby-sit for Roger and his wife quite a bit because we were, of course, neighbors. I was older and Patty Patterson would go to the grocery store or go to town, and I'd be there watching the kids, Sabrina, Brad, and Clint. I practically lived with them for a while when Roger Patterson was going through Hodgkin's disease." She was eleven years old in 1967. In the summer she rode horses with Patterson's children. "We'd be gone all day," she remembered.

Then, Patterson got ill. "I would help with the house stuff, I'd help clean for Pat. She'd have to take him to a doctor a lot. Pat would sit Roger outside in a chair so he could watch his boys practicing roping. They were going to do some team roping and get into the junior rodeo. He was sitting out there and schooling them on that."

To me, it seemed sad.

"He used to have little Shetland ponies," she recalled. "He made all the harnesses and wagons for these ponies. He did wonderful work with his hands. He wanted the horses exercised, so that's how I got into the family. We'd ride his little Shetland ponies so when he took them to parades they wouldn't be all high-strung and jittery. He was a very ingenious man. He made incredible sculptures."

"Of Bigfoot?"

"Yes." Patterson had made a clay bust of Bigfoot. "It's face was like an ape's. I thought, *Wow, that's incredible!* I can remember how detailed it was. It was all one color. You know, it might have taken him a month, but when I noticed it, it seemed like all of a sudden he was intrigued with Bigfoot. I can remember him talking to his kids about it. He was a *very* talented man. He made lamp shades out of old things, like out of an old gun. He made a mirror out of the old panes on a harness. When I saw that Bigfoot bust, I thought, wow, he just sat down and did that."

Sandy said she learned from either Patty Patterson or her children that Roger was making a movie. The children were excited, she remembered; they firmly believed in what their father was doing. After the famous footage was shown on television, Roger's children "thought he was going to be a movie star automatically."

I asked her if she remembered any commotion in the neighborhood concerning local Bigfoot sightings.

"You know, it's hard to remember. But everybody up there thought it was a farce. It's a small community." When Patterson displayed Bigfoot casts, "They all just laughed it off. They said, 'There's no way. This is all just a spoof.'"

What about Jerry Merritt's western town?

Well, she visited the western town once. "Only one time and that was enough for me. It was pretty fake. It wasn't authentic looking. They were going to make movies and use it as a backdrop. They were going to have these people come in. But it never went. I remember James Drury of [the TV show] *The Virginian* coming there. He came drunk and two hours late."

I was taken by surprise. This Jerry Merritt must have had some connections to lure a Hollywood actor to little, ol' Yakima. And Patterson knew Merritt. Was there a Hollywood connection to Patterson's film? Excitement stirred inside me. This angle would have to be explored.

Next, I called Joanne Johnson, Sandy's thirty-eight-year-old sister. She said that she had spent a lot of time growing up with the Patterson children. She rode horses with them and attended the same school, Ahtanum Valley Elementary in Wiley City. She spent nights with Sabrina at the Patterson house. Several times Patterson brought a saddle into the living room and totally dismantled it and taught the girls how to put it back together.

"He was always making things," she said, awed. "He took a metal, box-type frame and made a little Ski-Doo–type thing out of it. It had skis on it and it was pulled behind a Volkswagen for fun. You could sit a couple of people in it, and then one person would stand on the back, and they would run the brake, and then somebody would get in the Volkswagen and drive and pull it."

"So, it was like a sled?"

"Yes. He was always doing those kinds of things."

Patterson certainly had an inventive, creative mind, I thought.

"He cleaned up a room off a small barn and made a little weight room and a boxing room where he would teach his boys how to box."

One of Patterson's sons, Clint, brought the famous Bigfoot footage to school. "We watched it there. The kids were all in awe seeing this thing that they didn't know about. They were curious."

Joanne also remembered Patterson's dying. "I remember watching him deteriorate over the years, and how he was working on his diet. He would always make carrot juice. He had us try it. It's actually OK. I remember him in bed a lot."

"Was there any kind of controversy about the Bigfoot film among the neighbors?" I asked.

"There's always been jokes and comments around the community, that, you know, so and so over there dressed up. Or they used to say that so and so got you know who to dress up and do it. There was a lot of doubt about the validity of it."

"Your father mentioned Bob Heironimus," I slipped in.

"Yes. That they got him to put the suit on." She had met Heironimus and his wife and kids once.

About Jerry Merritt, she remembered only his western town. The town had a livery stable, a saloon, and a hotel, she recalled. Merritt made a haunted house from one of the buildings for Halloween. Around 1974 the western town was deteriorating; Patterson had been dead two years by then.

I hung up. Well, the Johnsons had provided some useful information. In the late 1960s the local ranchers in the Ahtanum Valley found Patterson's belief ludicrous, especially since Bigfoot had never appeared in the valley in their lifetimes. Yet here was a man who was constructing a movie set near his home, at least according to Les Johnson, and also claiming that Bigfoot was roaming his own neighborhood! In addition, it was clear Patterson had creative abilities: he could build things, take them apart, and had a flair for producing mechanical devices and low-grade art. It all added up to a man with an imagination and an inclination to act on that imagination. Also telling was Patterson's job history: he was unemployed. He may have ridden the rodeo circuit, but what did the man do to make *an actual living*? Everyone has to make money, everyone has to survive. He had a wife and three kids to support. Maybe for Roger Patterson, Bigfoot was the road to riches.

I intertwined my fingers behind my neck and stared up at the ceiling, thinking. Les Johnson, I remembered, had talked about one of Roger's buddies, Prentis Beck. Beck had a job with the Yakima Irrigation District, Johnson had said. One of his jobs was cleaning willows out of irrigation ditches. "He had a job. He wasn't irresponsible," Johnson had commented. "He was artistic, and a good man. He was caught up in the Bigfoot subject, but he wasn't like Roger." Prentis was dead, but his wife lived in Wiley City. "You could talk to her," Johnson had suggested.

Soon, Pat and I were driving back the way we had come, to Wiley City.

NOTE

1. "Washington Resource Guide, City of Yakima, Washington Facts Information" [online], http://www.usacitiesonline.com [July 2002].

4

JERRY BECK

Prentis kept a cast in his truck. . . . Some people were interested. Some thought it was a fake.

—Jerry Beck, widow of Prentis Beck,
a supporter of Roger Patterson

As Pat and I drove on Ahtanum Road toward Wiley City, I remembered that Patterson had acknowledged Prentis Beck in his book, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?*, calling Prentis "a long time friend and business associate." This apparent business aspect of Prentis's friendship with Patterson intrigued me.

With one hand on the wheel, I flipped open the ice chest in the back seat and thrust my hand into the cubes. "Prentis's name appears in several places in Patterson's book," I informed Pat as I handed her two icy Diet Cokes. "He went on field trips with Patterson."

A can hissed as Pat opened it. She handed it to me and then opened hers. We drank and drove in silence. "Whoa, let's get some footage of the ghost town," I said ten minutes later when I noticed we were approaching Mike Fairchild's house. "Nobody's behind us."

I slowed and braked the car at a strategic point overlooking Fairchild's property.

Out in the field leaned the lone, remaining, gray structure of Jerry Merritt's long-dead western town. Nostalgia engulfed me. I felt a longing for a time whose glimmering edges I was only now beginning to discern. I was fearful that those people holding tightly onto pieces of the Patterson story inside themselves would soon begin dying off. I felt for the video camera behind me, grabbed it, and handed it to Pat. "Pan left to right real slowly," I instructed. "Wow! Look at how the light's falling on the building through that opening in the clouds."

Pat leaned partially out of her window and recorded a minute of footage. "OK. Car coming," I announced. She pulled her arms back inside and held the video camera in her lap as we drove on.

A few minutes later gravel crunched under our tires as we pulled in front of Jerry Beck's little, white house in Wiley City, bordered by a small, chain-link fence.

A small woman with short, neatly primped gray hair, blue jeans, and a patterned blouse answered the door. She was firm and wiry, her nut-brown face wrinkled from the sun, her eyes bright.

"Jerry Beck?" I looked down at her through the mesh of the screen.

"Yes?" she squeaked, stepping back in surprise. It must be my monstrous height, I chuckled to myself. Next to me stood Pat, only 5'4". We must have made quite a sight for Beck, although Beck herself was tiny.

Over her shoulder, I saw a vacuum cleaner plugged into the wall. When I announced the reason for our visit—Roger Patterson—her face hardened and she blinked rapidly. Clearly, she was frightened. I begged for ten minutes of her time. Finally, she opened the door, and we stepped into her dining room, which opened into a country kitchen. She gestured us toward a small living room where a sofa and antique furniture were neatly arranged along the walls. The furniture was draped with white lace and dotted with throw pillows reminiscent of an earlier age. Everything appeared to be clean and straight-laced, as did Beck herself, whose clothes, I could see, were crisp and freshly washed. My sense was that she had lived in this style and manner long before her widowhood. All had been predictable then as now, all clear and understandable. And here we had come, not only interrupting Beck's routine, but like a thunderclap, shattering her late afternoon chores with the ghostly reminder of Roger Patterson.

Pat and I sat down on the sofa, and Beck pulled a chair away from the dining room table and placed it five feet in front of me. She sat down and folded her arms defensively. Her face had a tight, worried expression.

"I'd like to interview you about your memories of Roger Patterson," I said. "And I'd like to tape record the interview. Is that alright?"

"Well . . ." Her eyes darted from me, then to Pat and back.

"I've found that journalists often as not don't get the story right," I declared. "They get the story *wrong* because they usually don't tape their witnesses. Ever see a reporter standing there with a pen writing down everything on a pad? He just won't get it right. No way. He'll never get the quote right. How can he possibly remember everything his witness is saying, I mean, the exact words? Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes," she squeaked, then tightened her lips.

"One time I got a call from a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune*," I reminisced. "Now, the *Chicago Tribune* is a big, famous newspaper. He asked me what I thought UFOs were. I told him some of them could be extraterrestrial, but not all of them." Irritation swelled in my voice. "Then, his story came out in the *Tribune*. I excitedly read it. He wrote, 'Long believes UFOs are extraterrestrial.' He got it completely wrong! I bet you've seen stories on television that are completely inaccurate, haven't you?"

"Yes!" Beck said, becoming excited.

One of Roger Patterson's early followers was Prentis Beck, who Roger Patterson called a "business associate." Beck carried one of Patterson's Bigfoot casts in his truck to show disbelievers. Courtesy of Jerry Beck.

"I can't tell you how much it angers me!" I said loudly.

"It makes me mad, too," Beck said, her eyes flashing.

"So, can I tape record you?"

"Yes!"

I pushed RECORD, held the tape recorder out toward her, and asked Beck about her husband. Immediately, she withdrew into herself. I'd have to approach her memories of Patterson slowly, I realized, so I prompted her with questions of her youth. She chose her words cautiously, her sentences short and simple, spoken with a drawl and a slightly shrill voice. She was from Arkansas and her husband Prentis had worked for the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District for thirty-four years. She met Prentis in Colorado when she was twenty. He was from Arizona. They fell in love and married in Colorado. Prentis had a brother and a sister living in Yakima, and Prentis's mother and father had been up to Yakima several times. Prentis liked the area, and so Jerry and Prentis moved to Wiley City where they ended up living most of their adult lives. Prentis died at age seventy in 1991.

She fell silent.

"And he knew Patterson?"

"Yes." Her neck tightened. "Prentis was a friend of Roger Patterson," she confessed.

She volunteered nothing more.

I regrouped and circled around, trying different approaches. I took her back in time, using dates as markers on the path of her memory. Often she went blank and stared at me. I was hitting holes in the path, often got stuck, and was forced to back out. So I jumped forward in time. I wasn't sure if she just couldn't remember, or whether I'd hit a sensitive nerve. Perhaps my very presence, with Pat sitting a few feet away listening, was blocking her memory. Occasionally, I was convinced she was avoiding me. But gradually, slowly, information came out.

Prentis had traveled with Patterson to look into the story of the Mount St. Helens apes, she remembered. I took special note of this, because I had read this classic Bigfoot tale, which Patterson includes in his book, in which Fred Beck and four prospectors were set upon by boulder-throwing, hairy ape-creatures in a canyon on the east side of Mount St. Helens in Washington. I found the story unbelievable since Fred Beck shot one of creatures in the back three times, it fell into a canyon, and torrents of water flooded the canyon floor and supposedly washed away any evidence. In about 1964, Jerry Beck recalled, she and Prentis accompanied Patterson on a trip to Canada to interview a man named Albert Ostman who lay ill in a nursing home. Patterson also includes Ostman's unbelievable story in his book. Ostman claimed that he was kidnapped by a family of Bigfoot and lived among them. Ostman never produced a shred of evidence, nor did anyone before Ostman's time or after have a similar experience that could be proved.

A cloak of silence fell over Jerry Beck. She looked at me and blinked and continued to hug herself.

"Prentis was interested in Bigfoot, right?" I held my recorder closer.

She gripped her elbows with her hands. Prentis met Patterson in the mid-1950s, she said. "Prentis was very interested in Bigfoot. He didn't go around a whole lot with Roger Patterson interviewing people. He did a few times." Her voice squeaked, "Prentis never met a stranger he didn't like. Prentis was friendly."

"When did he become interested in Bigfoot?"

"When Roger started talking about Bigfoot, when the first story came out."

In his book Patterson says he became interested in Bigfoot in December 1959 when he read an article in *True Magazine* entitled "The Strange Story of America's Abominable Snowman," written by Ivan T. Sanderson. The article covered the Jerry Crew story, the catskinner who found large, five-toed prints near a construction road in the Bluff Creek area in late August 1958.

Jerry Beck remembered when Patterson traveled to California and made some casts of Bigfoot tracks. "Prentis made copies of the casts. When we went to Canada, Prentis took his casts with him and showed them to John Green." That was about 1964.

Ah, we're getting somewhere, I thought to myself. I knew from reading Patterson's book that in 1964 Patterson did make a trip to Willow Creek, California, then to nearby Bluff Creek. Green reports in *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* that Patterson visited him in 1965 when Patterson was working on his book. Beck's memory of the year seemed fairly accurate.

"So Prentis had copies of casts?" I asked.

"Prentis kept a cast in his truck." He often showed a copy of one of Patterson's casts to residents in the Ahtanum Valley. "It was a common event, him showing the cast. Some people were interested. Some thought it was a fake."

I asked her opinion of the cast. She had none, she said. Her face remained expressionless.

"Did you ever watch Patterson's famous footage?" I asked.

She admitted that she and Prentis watched Patterson's October 20, 1967, footage at Patterson's house, but again, she had no opinion of it. She said that Prentis remained a friend of Patterson until the day Patterson died.

"Ever hear of the ghost town?"

"Jerry Merritt did have what he called a 'ghost town' out there. But," her voice softened, "it didn't amount to anything. Just a few buildings."

She remembered Merritt building the ghost town, as well as Merritt's house near Lynch Lane and Merritt playing a musical instrument and singing. Beyond that, she had nothing more to say.

I took the plunge. "Did you ever hear of a bunch of guys running around and someone dressing up in an ape suit acting out Bigfoot?" I moved the recorder closer.

She drew back, tightening her grip on her elbows. "Oh." A pause drifted over her. "It was rumor that somebody said that," she said quietly. "But I don't . . . it wasn't . . . I—I never heard nothin' about that." A stark expression consumed her face.

"Ever heard of anyone wearing an ape suit?"

Her forehead crinkled. "No, I never heard that. But some guy, he claimed he dressed up like that, that's all I heard."

"Who would this guy be? Was it some guy from around here?"

"I don't know who it was."

"Did you ever see Patterson with a movie camera?"

She squinted her eyes, in thought.

"Did you ever hear that Patterson was making a documentary?" I rephrased.

"I heard that. But I don't know what that ever amounted to."

"Did you ever see Roger and his friends dressed up like cowboys and Indians?"

A little laugh burst forth, but she said nothing.

"Did Prentis ever dress up like an Indian? There was a guy running around with Roger who dressed up like an Indian."

"No." She emitted thin, screeching laughter and trembled, maintaining her position on the chair, her feet dangling.

Beck seemed to have little to say and next to nothing to add. I could see that she was a woman with little imagination. But something more was at work. I had the impression that she was afraid that if she answered any of my questions, she would be implicated in something—and it was this unknown something that scared her. Or maybe she truly didn't have any memories of Patterson. Yet why did I keep thinking she was defending Patterson in these moments of long, drawn-out silence?

"So Bigfoot brought Prentis and Roger together, as friends?"

"No," she insisted, "it wasn't just Bigfoot. They were friends before that. Prentis liked Roger, and Roger was a friend."

"Do you remember someone with a glass eye?" Johnson said that Bob Heironimus, the alleged Man in the Suit, had a glass eye. I wasn't about to reveal Heironimus's name to Beck. I had no reason to suspect Beck in any Bigfoot hoax, but if she knew Heironimus, she might alert him to my presence in the Ahtanum Valley. More importantly, I felt that the glass eye was a detail, and that if she answered yes, this detail would suggest that her memory was much better than she led on.

The web of wrinkles around her eyes puckered up as her mind struggled to uncover the memory. “I remember something about a glass eye. But I don’t remember what it was, or what it pertained to, or anything.”

“What else do you remember about Patterson?”

She thought for awhile. “Well, he was picky about what he ate. And I remember he drove a black Cadillac.”

This fact surprised me. Patterson, I knew, was unemployed most of the time. How could he possibly afford a Cadillac? An image took form in my mind—Roger Patterson sitting inside a huge Cadillac, the black cowboy hat on his head, peeking over the wheel.

“Interesting. Do you remember when he drove it? Was it before or after the famous movie he shot?”

“I don’t remember.”

Les Johnson had mentioned the Idle Hour tavern as a place where local cowboys and the Man in the Suit often hung out.

“Did Prentis hang out in taverns?”

She pursed her mouth. “No,” she said tightly, “Prentis had a beer every once in a while. He didn`t hang out in taverns. Prentis had a hobby and an interest with Roger.”

She fell silent. It was clear Jerry Beck would say little more.

As I ended the interview, I said, “Do you think Bigfoot is a real animal, or just a story?”

“I don’t know,” she said in a reedy voice. “To really believe in him, I’d have to see one first. Then I’d be convinced.”

“Did anyone ever say that Roger Patterson’s film was a hoax?”

“I don’t know of anyone.”

I smiled pleasantly. Then I shut off the recorder. She loosened her arms, relieved.

As Pat and I drove away, I let the feel of the interview settle in, then surveyed its outlines. Beck’s husband seemed to have been one of Patterson’s loyal followers. Obviously employed and responsible, he was different than Patterson. But something attracted him to Patterson; he followed him into the field, to Mount St. Helens, and all the way to Canada. He carried a Bigfoot cast in his truck; he was willing to talk publicly about the creature. For all intents and purposes, Prentis Beck was a promoter and a supporter of Patterson even though he had never seen Bigfoot or found a Bigfoot track himself. What had caused him to believe?

As we pulled out of Yakima for home, I pictured Jerry Beck sitting motionless, her arms across her chest, her mouth hard. I would have to talk to her again. I was convinced that her reticence was partially an impulsive reaction to a stranger entering her home, and that the passage of more than thirty years had washed away most of the details of Patterson, the ghost town, and whatever Bigfoot activities were unfolding in the Ahtanum Valley during Patterson’s heydey in the mid-1960s. But self-protection was also at work in her defensive posture. I sensed that she didn't want to get involved, and that a secret about Patterson was in the very air and soil of the Ahtanum Valley where she had lived her entire adult life. It was a secret that was part of an older generation that had grown up with the Patterson story, and who had lived the story over and over in their minds and in conversation. It was lore. And now, a stranger, me, was striding into their midst seeking to hear that story.

Beck's husband had been a good friend of Patterson, I thought as we drove onto Highway 97 heading north, toward home. Jerry Beck herself had known Patterson to some extent. Was Beck aloof because she wanted nothing to do with Patterson? Or was it what I suspected, that she was protecting the legendary Bigfoot filmmaker? And she either truly knew little about Merritt and the Man in the Suit, or she knew far more than she was willing to tell. I turned to Pat and said, "I think she's holding back on Merritt and Heironimus."

Merritt and Heironimus were now my hottest leads in the Patterson story. I needed to approach them, and soon. But before I did so, I was convinced that I needed even more background on Patterson and his "activities," as Les Johnson called them. Without enough facts, and if I was only lucky to get one interview with Merritt and Heironimus, I might completely fail at learning all that I could, or uncovering the truth.

5

THE PATTERSON BROTHERS

Roger was quite an enterpriser. He was into inventing things.
—Glenn Patterson, brother of Roger Patterson

Roger did whatever he could to come up with money to survive.
—Loren Patterson, brother of Roger Patterson

Pat and I pulled into our parking stall at the apartment complex in Bellevue. I lugged the cameras, video equipment, briefcase, and ice chest from the car. How big would this Bigfoot project become? I groaned.

A few days later, all rested, I sat down in our cramped study. Pat and I had set up two office desks that butted up against each other under the apartment window that faced the scrawny patch of green lawn outside. We positioned our computers on the opposite ends of our desks and placed our phones, tape recorders, printers, paper, and supplies between. It made for a cozy arrangement. With only a few feet separating our chairs, we often bumped against each other as we worked.

I was alone this evening with a cup of green tea, a fresh pad of paper, and a pen. I logged onto my computer. Using an online phone directory, I found the numbers of Roger Patterson's brothers, Glenn, Loren, and Les. Les Johnson had given me the names of the brothers and advised me to call them to find out the facts of Patterson's life. At least it was a starting point, I thought, as I punched the square buttons on my phone. "Glenn Patterson?" I inquired when the phone connection was made.

"Yes. This is Glenn."

GLENN PATTERSON

I soon discovered that Glenn was happy to talk. At seventy years old, he had a soft, kind voice edged with tiredness. "I think about Roger a lot," he said fondly.

He laid out the essentials in brief, simple statements. "He was quite a little guy. Roger had sandy-colored hair and hazel eyes. He always wore western dress. He wore boots. In the mountains he wore chaps. He'd get a kick out of things. He was out of the cowboy mold. He liked good, fast horses. His favorite horse was a little, gray quarter horse."

Nostalgia took hold of the old man. "Roger was born in Walls, South Dakota, on the wall of the Badlands. I was born there, too. Rapid City is the nearest town. Our dad, Clarence Clayton Patterson, and our granddad, had a ranch in South Dakota. Granddad wanted to mortgage the ranch that was paid for and buy a neighboring ranch. Our dad tried to talk him out of it, but he did anyway. Then there came the bad times—a drought—and the Depression, and we lost everything."

Glenn said that the Patterson family was composed of Clarence, Clarence's wife, and their three sons and two daughters. The oldest to the youngest were Loren, Lester, Phyllis, Glenn, Roger, and Iva. Before the Depression, Clarence Patterson's sister and her husband had moved to Winthrop, Washington, to ranch. Clarence was optimistic that he could get back on his feet. And so with a dollar and a half in his pocket and a tank full of gas, he moved the family to the Methow Valley in northern Washington state. Clarence ended up moving from job to job in the Northwest, and one day Mrs. Patterson said to her husband, "That's enough." In 1938 the Patterson family settled in West Yakima, six miles out in the country in what's called Wide Hollow. At that time Roger was five years old.

Back then there were orchards and plenty of wide-open spaces, Glenn said. Clarence bought half an acre, worked for different local farmers, and performed various odd jobs. Then World War II struck. Clarence had served in World War I as a machinist petty officer. With this new war, Clarence rejoined the Navy with his same rank. He was nearly fifty years old. Right before the war ended, he was killed when a torpedo struck his ship in the Battle of the Coral Sea. At that time Glenn and Roger, the youngest boys, were working for orchard owners while they attended Wide Hollow Grade School at the corner of Seventy-second and Nob Hill.

Around eight or nine, Roger got interested in show business, as did his brothers. While watching the latest vaudeville shows at the Capitol Theater on South Third Street in downtown Yakima, the brothers became enthralled with tumbling acts. Soon, they formed their own. It was Roger's entrance into show business.

Glenn said, "We put on tumbling acts at the YMCA and for different organizations, like the Odd Fellows Lodge. We did the act for three or four years. Roger was twelve or so when he stopped tumbling. We earned some money. People paid with donations."

Roger went on to high school, first Highland High School, then Yakima High School (named today Davis High School). After he graduated, he attended Yakima Junior College. "He played football in the back field. He could run fifty yards pretty fast," Glenn said with pride. "He had that burst in his legs. At rodeos, they'd bet on Roger's foot races. He'd beat guys running flat out for fifty yards. He could do back flips and chin himself ten times with one arm."

CAPITOL THEATRE
VAUDEVILLE
FEATURE PICTURES
ROAD ATTRACTIONS

Roger Patterson became inspired by entertainment when he and his brothers watched tumbling acts at the Capitol Theater in Yakima in the early 1940s. Photo by Greg Long.

I raised my cup of tea and sipped. I would let Glenn talk, uninterrupted. This was useful information.

On May 13, 1953, Roger enlisted in the Army. The Korean War was nearing its end, and Roger ended up stationed in Germany. Several enlisted men invited Roger to start a tumbling act with them. They entered a talent show and won, and the Army sponsored Roger and his friends, sending them on military shows around Europe. Some of Roger's fellow tumblers were circus performers, and they begged Roger to perform with them after their Army stint. Roger declined, and once he was discharged on May 4, 1955, he returned to Yakima. He told Glenn, "You're never going to get ahead workin' for somebody else," and so he joined the rodeo circuit. This was the second time he entered show business. "He rode buckin' horses and bulls."

"Roger didn't rope a lot," Glenn remembered. "But Roger did bulldog [ride after a steer on horseback]." Also, during his rodeoing, sometime in 1958, Roger worked for a time for Al DeAtley, his brother-in-law. DeAtley was married to Iva, Roger's younger sister.

I wrote DeAtley's name on my pad of paper and boldly underscored it. I remembered that Green reported briefly in *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* that

DeAtley was the first person to see Roger's famous film footage. "I understand," Green wrote, "that he had put up the money for Bob [Gimlin] and Roger to make the trip and had a one-third interest in the results."[1]

"What do you know about DeAtley's relationship with Patterson?" I asked.

"I don't know what kind of deals they had going on."

Sometime in the mid-1950s Roger married, and the next thing Glenn remembered was Roger's wagons. "I dropped in to see him, and he was making these miniature wagons. I don't know how he made them!" he marveled. "They was good! He really made some dandies. He didn't have the tools. But he was always innovative. He could just do something like that. It was kind of unbelievable."

Glenn paused, trying to recall. "Roger bought some angora goats somewhere. You know those angora goats? They're real good for clearing brush. They clip them for making angora sweaters. Roger had them pulling the wagons in a circle. They had long hair, kind of blonde colored. Beautiful goats! He'd comb their hair. He even put brass knobs on their horns."

Unfortunately, the goats were unruly at first, and they sometimes tore their yokes to pieces. "Roger said, 'It's all right, I'll fix them up.'" He repaired the yokes and trained the goats to behave.

Then, Roger had an idea. He approached Harry Herring, who owned H&H Meats, the biggest meat packer in Yakima. "Herring was a rich guy," Glenn said, "but he really liked Roger." The men came to an agreement. Roger leased his wagons and horses to Herring, and Herring bought Roger a truck and a trailer to haul the wagons and horses. Roger transported the wagons and horses to grocery stores in Yakima and around the county that carried H&H meats. The horses pulled the wagons around the parking lots, and Roger gave rides to children.

And so, for a third time, I counted to myself, Roger Patterson had become involved in entertainment. "He was a heck of a guy with kids," Glenn said. "He knew how to talk to them." Patterson gave rides to children for about three years, and then, for some unknown reason, quit the entire business.

"Roger was quite an enterpriser," Glenn remarked. "He was into inventing things." One of Patterson's inventions was the "prop lock." The prop lock, Glenn explained, was derived from the plastic clip invented to hold together the end of a bread bag. A Yakima-based company named Kwik Lok, Glenn said, invented the clip. "A Kwik Lok guy encouraged Roger and stuff." Patterson took the idea of the clip and fashioned a larger version of it to fit on the end of a stick. He used the device to prop up the branches of fruit trees in the local orchards. Unfortunately, Patterson discovered that the notched clip would slip free, and the prop would fall down and tractors would roll over it, snapping it in two. "Nothing too much came of that invention," said Glenn.

"Seems like he was a pretty creative person," I commented.

"Yes," he said, his voice dreamy. "He drew pictures of horses. He did some carving. I remember he bought a motorcycle, and he tore it all apart. It was an English Triumph. Well, Roger didn't like the color. He took the bike completely apart and he repainted it yellow and black. He did all the pin-striping. I thought it was beautiful. The paint job was perfect, with stripes on the fender and right down to the minute details. It looked like it came from the factory. Then after it was all done he took the bike completely apart and repainted it, maroon. He did all this without schooling. He was quite an artist. I have one of Roger's paintings. He drew and painted buckin' horses."

Yes, it seemed Roger was a talented man, I reflected. He could have been a professional craftsman if he'd wanted. But he never became one. "How did he survive if he wasn't working for anyone?" I asked.

Glenn didn't answer at first. "That's a good question."

"Did he sell things to make a living?"

"I don't think so. Patricia worked once in a while, but not much. They lived in her dad's house. Her dad had quite a bit of property in Tampico. Roger didn't have to pay rent."

Roger Patterson's lack of employment was odd. I couldn't figure out how he could keep a family alive.

For a period of time, Roger had a little fertilizer business. He would make the circuit of dairy farms, sack up their manure, and sell it around town for people's gardens and flower beds. Then something new caught Roger's interest. "He read about Bigfoot, and he started looking into it. He wanted to capture Bigfoot alive, not shoot it. He started taking trips and got plaster of Paris footprints and met loggers in Humboldt County, California." One man who accompanied Patterson on his trips was Rod Thornton, Glenn added.

I remembered Patterson had acknowledged Thornton in his book, and in 1964 Thornton had accompanied Patterson to Willow Creek and Eureka, California. Thornton, like Prentis Beck, was a follower of Patterson. Unfortunately, Thornton was dead, Glenn informed me.

Around the time that Roger was going down to Northern California, Glenn got a job driving a truck, and because he was on the road most of the time he lost touch with his kid brother. He did remember a big van, though. "Roger bought an old mail truck, an old Ford. It had a big cab and sleeping quarters above. Roger rigged up some deals on top of it. He was going to make sounds to attract Bigfoot. The van had a sliding door on one side. He carried stuff in the back. He wasn't going to traipse around hunting Bigfoot. He would attract him. He was going to try to tranquilize him."

"Did you ever hear of a man named Bob Heironimus?"

There was a restrained moment of silence. "I knew Bob Heironimus. He grew up with us. He lived in the Ahtanum area. His dad was a log truck driver. Bob Heironimus had several brothers. I knew the whole family."

"What about Bob Gimlin?"

"Bob Gimlin was once in the car business. He had horses all the time, but he wasn't really a rancher. I haven't seen him in a long time."

I was afraid it might offend Glenn, since he respected Roger, but I decided to spring it on him anyway. "Did you ever see an ape suit in Roger's house?"

"No," he said in a mild, kind voice, without an instant of hesitation. "He didn't have an ape suit in his house."

Glenn remembered Jerry Merritt and the western town. "Merritt and Roger talked about making some movies at the western town." But he couldn't recall hearing any information on how Roger and Merritt would finance the movies.

What Glenn remembered clearly, however, was Roger's death. During the years Roger was chasing Bigfoot, Glenn was hauling hay from Montana to El Paso, Texas. He saw Roger only rarely. So when he saw Roger for the first time with Hodgkin's disease, Glenn was startled because Roger looked healthy enough. The doctors had given Roger two years, but he ended up living eight years with the disease. (Hodgkin's disease is a lymphoma or form of cancer that attacks the body's lymphatic system. The disease often starts in the lymph nodes in the neck, underarm, and groin. If untreated, the disease can spread to the liver, bone marrow, gastrointestinal tract, lungs, brain, or skin, leading to death. Unlike in the 1960s, most patients survive the disease today, if diagnosed early.)

Whenever he could, Glenn disconnected his trailer and drove the truck to Tampico to visit Roger and check up on him. One day Glenn found Roger lying on the floor in his house. He was in agony. "You've got to go see if they can help you," Glenn insisted.

"I don't want to see no damn doctor!" Roger shouted. "Doctors don't know nothin' about nutrition!" He didn't want pain killers, either. Patricia (or Patty), Roger's wife, was giving him shots at the time, and she told Glenn she didn't like to give Roger shots. Roger was taken to the hospital, but he kept fighting it all the way. "I don't want to go!" he yelled. Fluid had collected in his diaphragm and around his heart, and the doctors drained off a quart of fluid. The second time he went to the hospital, he died.

"Roger was an aggressive little guy that never backed down from nothing," Glenn said fondly. "He was a real skookum kid. He got into a few scuffles over his size. He had a kind of temper."

I wondered if Glenn, knowing his brother's interest, believed in the existence of Bigfoot.

"I'm pretty sure he does [exist]," Glenn said with confidence. "Roger showed me some hair from a Bigfoot once."

Glenn evidently found it easy to believe in Roger, and in Bigfoot as well: "I saw a movie where Bigfoot saved a boy who was lost. It was a good, little movie."

"Is there a real Bigfoot in Roger's footage?" I asked.

"I think so," Glenn said readily.

I could sense that Glenn missed his brother, missed his boldness and imagination.

"He was a lot of fun to be around," Glenn said. "There was never a dull moment. He loved music, and he sang western songs. He'd go into taverns with bands and sing with them. He was always jolly. When anyone got bucked off, he found it funny. He pulled jokes on guys."

For example, when Roger was eating in a restaurant with friends in Brookings, Oregon, he started babbling in double talk. When his friend Marty Baker said, "What?" Roger jumped up and said, "Don't you call me no wop!" And a flow of nonsense followed. "Cow. A box of apples."

"Roger was an entertainer," Glenn said with a degree of reverence. "He liked to make people laugh."

Glenn's outpouring of memories trickled to a stop. Then, he said, "He was always coming up with something. Roger's mind was always working."

I thanked Glenn. As I hung up, his final statement recurred. *Roger's mind was always working.* I wondered, *What* would Patterson have continued to think up if he hadn't died at age thirty-eight?

LOREN PATTERSON

At seventy-five years old, Loren Patterson was the oldest Patterson brother. I was fortunate enough to reach him by phone a few days after I talked to Glenn. Our conversation began with Roger's illness. "Mom died from leukemia. We have cancer in our genes." Loren's voice was gentle, and the words came easily and naturally, like a wide, calm river. "Roger developed himself physically because he was smaller than the rest of us. He was next to the youngest baby in the family. He was 5'4", while the rest of us were 5'7" to 5'8" tall."

After serving in World War II for four years, Loren came home in September 1945. He was shocked at the change in Roger's physical prowess. He could plainly see that his little brother, now in junior high school, was in good shape. Loren was ten years older than Roger, but "I couldn't outrun him, I couldn't out–arm wrestle him, I couldn't do nothing with him. Roger was one of the toughest. I ran into thousands of guys in the service, but Roger ranked up there really high in that aspect of it. I was the oldest, and our father was dead. I put pressure on him to go ahead and finish high school."

Loren told Roger that he met a soldier in the Army who could do one-arm chin-ups with his middle finger. Roger wanted to do that, too, and so he set out to further develop his strength. He walked to and from the barn on the lower end of the Patterson farm carrying buckets full of water with only one finger, and he kept increasing the weight until he was carrying a hundred pounds.

"He could do a one-arm military press with a one-hundred-pound lead pig," Loren said. "Plumbers use them. They're about two feet long. He'd stand with his shoulder against the wall and do one-hundred-pound presses with one arm. And he could clean and jerk three hundred pounds. Heck, he only weighed a hundred and thirty-five pounds, and he could press his own weight with a barbell. He had pictures of Otto Arco, one of the first old timer weight lifters, who could press double his body weight. Roger could have, too, if he had worked at it longer."

Loren fondly remembered the Patterson brothers' tumbling act. After watching tumblers at vaudeville shows, Loren would come home and try it with Roger. "That's how we got started. I started doing hand balancing and back handsprings, and then I would do hand-to-hands with Roger on the ground, standing up with him and doing flips."

The boys mastered the four high, with Les on the bottom, Loren on Les's shoulders, Glenn next, and finally Roger up on top, twenty feet above the ground. Roger learned the stiff-arm, placing his hands on the floor, pulling his legs together straight, and raising his body up off the floor. "Back then, this was unheard of."

Tumbling became a central part of Roger's life, in elementary school, high school, and the military. When Roger got out of the Army, he turned his sights on rodeo. "We were all rodeoing, all four of us," Loren said. Roger liked roughstocks—the saddle broncs, bareback broncs, and bulls. "He loved riding bulls. He rode horses bareback." Loren laughed, a memory floating up. "He would get hammered and jerked because if he got a little bit off balance, he wouldn't let go. But those horses will really jerk the riggin' around your hand. He just needed a little more finesse to go on, but he loved to do it."

However, it was hard to make a living at rodeo. "You could do rodeo, but you'd starve to death. You needed another job."

So, Roger worked little jobs scraping up the money to pay for the entry fees and the gas to get to the rodeo. If he won $200 to $300 for a show over the weekend, the winnings would set him up for the next two to three shows. The key to making a profit was winning every weekend.

"Roger did whatever he could to come up with money to survive," Loren recalled. "He sold fertilizer in the spring of the year. Sometimes ranchers would charge him to remove horse or cow manure, sometimes they wouldn't charge him anything. Being strong, he'd load the truck nothing flat. He'd put an ad in the paper, and he had some customers. He sold the manure for $7.00 a pickup load. He made $40 to $70 a day, but it was short-lived. Then the Bigfoot thing came along. That really got a-hold of him. That was his whole life in the place of almost starving, then some people giving him a grubstake every once in a while. If not, he might have starved."

I wondered who set up grubstakes for Roger. Without a full-time job, was he approaching people for handouts? I lifted my cup of tea and drank.

"He finally made that movie and whatnot, and he was getting sick about that time—"

I interrupted. "He was trying to make money out of the Bigfoot subject?"

"Yeah, which he did. One day he held out a $100,000 check that he got for the movie. At that time, that was quite a bit. That pretty much set him up."

I was stunned. *One hundred thousand dollars.* This was a hefty sum of money in the late 1960s. I explored this memory with Loren. Perhaps he was wrong. He concluded that he was certain that the sum was at least $50,000. He was absolutely certain that the sum was extremely large because he had never held in his hand such a check in his whole life. He was on horseback at a rodeo preparing to team rope with a friend when Roger walked up. Roger didn't say anything, just reached up and handed the check to Loren. "*Whooooa!*" Loren said, staring at the huge figure on the check.

At this point in my investigation, I knew a little from my reading about Roger Patterson's dealings with the movie industry. Supposedly he sold movie rights to a movie company, American National Enterprises (ANE), located in Salt Lake City. If the famous footage of October 20, 1967, was a hoax, I wondered if the movie company was involved. I asked Loren if he thought he had held Roger's check in his hand before or after October 20, 1967. If he held it before October 20, 1967, then Roger's film was a hoax.

"It was after Roger got the film. A lot of people were after him for it. But Roger was a tough negotiator; he sloughed them off and spat in their face. They wouldn't pay much and wanted control." Loren guessed that Roger received the check a year or two after the film was shot.

But could Roger, I asked, have had contacts in Hollywood to produce a movie *before* October 20, 1967?

"I think there was something in the works," he said. "But it never did come to fruition. It never worked out as far as I know."

Loren did know about Roger's homegrown documentary that he was shooting on the South Fork of Ahtanum Road, before the famous Bluff Creek footage. "There were some local guys or neighbors that wanted to have a scene of a few people involved, you know. It was a film like Roger was hunting, like a safari-type picture in Africa. He used horses, and they came down steep hills. Roger slid on one of the horses. The horse barely stayed on his feet. He could have got hurt."

I asked about Al DeAtley's connection to Roger.

"Al DeAtley. Of course he had money. Al was kind of helping finance Roger a little bit, but nobody trusted Al all that much, so they were suspicious of anything that could happen."

The tone of Loren's voice had changed. I sensed he was entering uncomfortable territory. "See, a lot of people accused them of the—" He paused. "—of having a suit on, having a monkey suit on, a big gorilla with a man inside of it."

I just listened, but intently.

"Roger swore he didn't," Loren said. "I talked to him a lot of times about it, and we talked about it some before he died. Roger would get irritated because I approached him off and on at different times, and he kind of got a little upset with that. 'Boy, you don't really think that I would pull something like that off?'"

If Al DeAtley had financed Roger, could DeAtley, I asked, have financed the construction of a special costume?

"Al is a shrewd businessman. That's one thing you've got to say for Al DeAtley—he fought for everything he got. He earned it." DeAtley was in the paving business, Loren said, highways and freeways.

"He was a hard, tough man," Loren said with respect, "impossible to work for almost. He'd do whatever it took to win."

Then he mumbled. "That's why I thought with him being . . . that's why I talked to Rog'. I never did actually ask Al, I never did." His voice trembled. He was uneasy, afraid of something. "I just figured. . . ." He started stuttering. "Well . . . he—he'll—he'll tell me what he wants to tell me. Because I knew him well enough to know."

I thought, *What* exactly had Al DeAtley done? He had financially supported Roger, but to what extent? What *exactly* was his involvement with the footage? A sudden choppy wave had swept across Loren's predictable, soft, steady surface. I was puzzled by this change; I sensed he was hiding something.

I mentioned Bob Heironimus and the fact that his name had surfaced as a person involved with an ape suit. "I never had heard of that," Loren said. "I know of the guy. I know of the guy. I don't know him real well."

"People say he wore a suit for Roger's film."

"It may have been," he admitted. "As far as Roger was concerned, I'm sure that he didn't. I mean . . . I mean, if he did, I could . . . you know, somehow you know. . . ."

I had definitely hit a nerve.

Loren caught himself. "Roger was anything but a liar. In fact, he hated liars, he hated people that exaggerated something. He hated somebody who said something that was a lie, or said they could do something when he knew they couldn't. He was tough." He described with enthusiasm how Roger grabbed Loren and put him into an "airplane spin," lifting him up and wheeling him around in a circle over his head. Loren also saw Roger grab a "competitor," put him in an airplane spin, too, and throw him over a car. "I saw him do that twice. It was just unbelievable. He didn't like lying about anything, and he didn't like liars. I can honestly say that it would surprise me to no end if he out and out just lied about something."

I asked myself, Were these proof of Roger's honesty—or of his physical strength?

"Roger was hardheaded. He had to prove everything to me," Loren continued. He brought up an incident when he and Roger had gone down to Humboldt County before Thanksgiving in 1966. It started snowing while the brothers were driving on a steep logging road, huge flakes flooding the sky, the snow quickly piling up into dangerous hillocks. Loren asked Roger if he was planning on continuing to drive up a steep switchback. "Why not?" Roger asked. "Of course I am." Loren actually leaped out, and Roger drove sluggishly through the snow by himself until he spun out and was stuck in the drifts. "Let's see you back that thing off of there now!" Loren shouted. "You got up there, now how are you going to get down!" Roger struggled, his tires spinning, then finally he found a toehold and drove down, backward. "Get this thing in gear and keep it rolling!" Loren said as he jumped in.

Roger the showoff, Roger having to prove his point. . . .

Roger didn't want anyone to tell him what to do, just as he wanted to make money off only his own ideas. Loren remembered that Roger went to see Roy Rogers, the famous cowboy star, possibly after October 20, 1967, during a period when Roger was managing to get on television talk shows. Roger drove right to Rogers's house. Dale Evans, Rogers's wife, answered the door. "I want to know about marketing," Patterson said. Roy Rogers invited him in. "Roger talked to Roy for a couple of hours. Roger said that Roy was one of the nicest celebrities he met, or ever will meet. Roy had everything, and yet he was as down to earth as anybody could be."

The interview finally wound down. I checked my watch. It was getting late, and I had to get up early the next day to go to work. We said good-bye. I peeled the sheets of notes off the pad and clipped them together. Les Patterson, the second oldest Patterson brother, was the last of the siblings to interview. A few days later, I reached him by phone and interviewed him for nearly two hours. Before we hung up, he invited me to visit him anytime.

Pat and I discussed making a trip to Les Patterson's house in Pasco, Washington. It was a long drive, another hour beyond Yakima, but we were excited to go; Les had mentioned he had photographs of Roger.

LES PATTERSON

A few weeks later, we drove up into Les Patterson's gravel driveway on his little ranch south of Pasco. A slight, wiry man came to the door. I could see that the hats he had worn over the years had shaded his forehead, leaving the skin white; the rest of his face was brown and sun-baked with deep wrinkles around his eyes. The grip of his hand was tight and strong from dealing with cattle and horses all his life. At seventy-five, he was energetic, bright-eyed, garrulous, and a true professional rodeo man.

Les waved us to a sofa in his family room while he claimed a worn recliner. With his permission, I started the recorder. He explained that until 1987, he had put in forty years as a nuclear operator at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Yakima. With a

Les Patterson, Roger Patterson's second oldest brother, called Roger Patterson "a genius." Photo by Pat Long.

steady, well-paying job, he could afford to rodeo. "Rodeo was my sideline," he said. "I'm still in the game as a stock contractor selling team roping and steer wrestling cattle to forty rodeos a year."

Les attested avidly to his brother Roger's physical strength. "He had a *tremendous* body, *tremendous* strength! He won the Pacific Coast, short-man, body-building contest. He had eighteen-inch arms."

But I needed more useful information from Les. "Did Roger have a steady job of any type?"

"No," he answered without a beat, "not to my knowledge. He darn sure never worked for anybody that I know of." His voice was smooth and well cured, like that of a professional radio announcer.

He recalled that Roger worked one time for a half hour or so for an auto parts house in Yakima, then quit. "I said to him, 'You quit your job already? What in the world! You weren't in there very long.' Roger said, 'I will starve to death before I'll work for anybody but myself from now on.' He pursued everything he could besides holding down a job for somebody else. He never did have a formal job after that. He wanted to do it on his own."

Not having a job didn't help Roger's financial situation. He was frustrated by a lack of money. "We came from the lower middle class," said Les. "We were poor people. We were hardscrabble people. We had a few cows and a horse, nothing to any great extent. I think Roger always remembered that. We were always hard-pressed. If we wanted a new saddle or something like that, we had to wait quite a while before we could accumulate enough money to buy one. He really had it in his mind to become at least a millionaire, and be able to pursue almost anything he wanted to do. He never did quite reach that goal, but he didn't die a pauper either."

Roger Patterson, *a self-made millionaire*? Al DeAtley was part of Roger's dream, explained Les. DeAtley was trying to promote Roger "because he was of the opinion that Roger could hit it big." Les described what he thought Al was thinking: "'This guy could have something here, and I've got the money to get him over the hump maybe, and I can help him promote this [Bigfoot subject] and also be compensated financially.' I think that was the story behind the song."

"As a businessman, Al thought he could profit from Bigfoot?" I asked.

"Right."

"And Roger could become kind of a star, I guess you might say?"

"Yeah, there you go," Les agreed, his eyes beaming. He rested his arms on his chair. I could see they were burnished from the sun, the hair bleached. "Yes, that's exactly what it conveyed to me. It conveyed to me that DeAtley could promote Bigfoot."

Les's deep voice rolled and moved like an excited bull rocking in a chute, and his wound-up energy flowed down into his legs which bounced nervously. "He had the financial set-up to promote Bigfoot, and Roger was the star, and he wanted to make sure the people got an idea in their heads from looking at all the presentations and all these so-called media pictures and documents and writings that this Bigfoot was big time! That was what he was trying to convey."

Les explained that DeAtley was, and remains, a rich man. Les didn't travel in the same circles as Al. "It's kind of an economic caste system," he said. But he knew that Al had helped make a movie that featured Roger. From Les's description, I could see that this wasn't the American National Enterprises (ANE) movie I was aware of (which I still needed to investigate) but another movie. I had never read about this other movie in any of the Bigfoot literature. I listened closely.

The movie, which Les first saw at a family gathering, impressed him. It was produced apparently not long after the Bigfoot footage was shot. It was well-done and well-rehearsed, and it was designed to promote Roger as a Bigfoot hunter. Les believed that DeAtley funded it and put it all together. "The movie gave a brief outline on Roger, and what he was trying to do and prove. Al was the narrator."

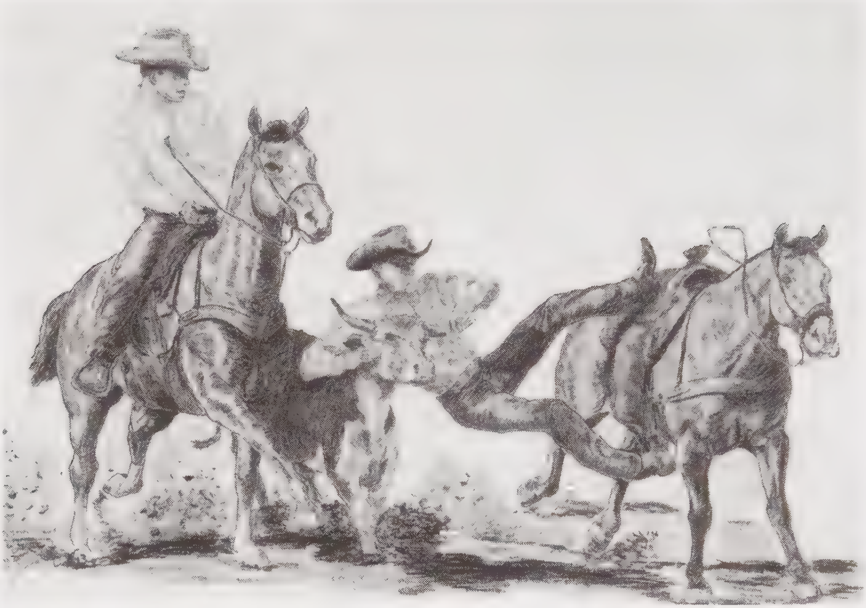
He described the movie in detail. It opened with a shot of DeAtley nonchalantly tossing some magazines on a table. Then, the camera zoomed in on the covers, which showed Roger's face and Bigfoot casts. Then DeAtley faced the camera squarely and began to talk. His attitude, Les remembered, was, "You take it or leave it. It's your decision whether you think this is true, or you don't. I'm telling you this is the story." As a promoter in the movie, "Al certainly looked the part. He dressed real good. He's got a good command of the English language. He did it in a very, very easy-going fashion, and it left you with the idea, 'Well, this guy here, he evidently believes it, or he wouldn't go do this thing,' and yet he's telling you, 'Make up your own mind.'"

Like Al, Roger was also talented at promotion. "He was a *tremendous* public speaker," Les said proudly in his rich voice, "and a *convincing* speaker. He had a real command of the English language. The guy could convince you that he was more or less telling the truth, that he was on the right track."

Roger gave a presentation at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City while on tour with the movie, Les recalled. After the showing, he strolled onto the stage in a black suit and a black cowboy hat in front of sixteen thousand people. Bigfoot casts were on the stage with him. He picked up the microphone, and he talked eloquently about Bigfoot and then answered questions for forty-five minutes. Les saw Roger's presentation on film afterward. It showed Roger undergoing some tough questioning.

Les asked him later, "How did you ever get out of that trap?"

"'Hey, man, I just answered it the way I planned it,' Roger explained. 'The people accepted my definition.' Oh, he was extremely versatile," Les said with a smile. "He could converse on any level. I remember when he spoke at the theater in Richland, Washington. He was even on the marquee. In the audience were people with degrees, nuclear scientists, planners, schedulers, craftsmen—knowledgeable and competent human beings. He was taking questions from them and answering them with ease."



Roger Patterson was a self-trained artist, fascinated by rodeo and other western subjects. "He was a stickler for detail," said Les Patterson. Depicted here is a steer wrestler in action. Courtesy of Les Patterson.

Roger even had Ford Motor Company believing in him, Les remembered. They were so impressed that they furnished Roger with Land Rovers and vehicles of all sizes.

"Roger also convinced MGM studios to support him. Some of the studio people thought he had potential to be big time. He stayed there a week. He showed stuff he had, he tried to get a motion picture or documentary on his activities."

MGM loaned him a jeep with two camera men. Roger proposed to show how he could bring a Bigfoot out of the hills, alive. He and Bob Gimlin took a custom-made tranquilizer gun with them into Durango Province in Mexico. The MGM crew went with them. On horseback, Patterson and Gimlin drove a wild bull up from a big draw. The bull charged Roger, and at the last minute he fired. Suddenly, the bull stumbled and fell, asleep, twenty feet from him. Les saw the sequence on film.

Roger had an "uncanny talent," as Les put it, for creative expression. To prove this, he pushed himself up and invited Pat and me to join him in his den. We followed him into a small, narrow room with a desk cluttered with assorted papers. Les pointed to two of Roger's paintings hanging on the walls. One was of a steer wrestler. The other one showed the great J. B. "Frog" McMeans, an Okie horse trainer, roping calves. "Look at the detail!" Les gushed. "He had such a knowledge of horse anatomy. Roger was such a stickler for detail. Roger once carved bulldoggin' pictures into the side of one of my saddles."

Les remembered that Roger started drawing when he was eight or nine years old. "That was his favorite pasttime. He loved to draw. He could just glance at anything and put it down on paper. He sketched his sisters, his mother. He'd draw pictures of his favorite horses and dogs. He was further into his drawing when I came back from the service."

As I took photographs of Roger's paintings, Les stepped up the cadence of his speech. At the rodeo, he said, Roger would set up an easel and use charcoal to sketch cowboys in action. Later, he filled in the outlines with paint. He remembered when Roger painted a big mural for a cattle rancher in Cle Elum, Washington. "He stayed there almost three weeks to a month drawing it. It showed the rancher and his daughter bringing cattle out of the hills. He was very happy how he was treated up there. He was an *exceptional* artist."

Les's eyes were bright with excitement. "Roger had a photographic memory, too. He was a speed reader. He had a tremendous mind, could remember everything. He could meet you one time, then walk up to you two years later and put a name to your face. That was why people liked him so well, because he always knew everybody's name. He met them one time and could remember them."

Les began pacing quickly about the den, a wide grin on his face. "This guy was thinking so far ahead of the rest of us that we couldn't follow him. And here he was just a little guy. Me and Loren used to talk about him. We'd say, 'Well, he's a genius!' Roger had a *tremendous* IQ. He was always telling us what to do even when he was just a little kid. 'You guys got the wrong idea,' he'd say. 'This is the way this should be done.' Roger was the leader, even though he was the youngest. But the man behind the song was Roger. *Always Roger.* 'Go see what Roger says about this.' And he was constantly reading about some theory, some experiment. He always said—he was just a kid—'There's nothin' that you can come upon that you can't improve on.' *You don't do anything you can't improve upon.* This was the whole concept."

Les's passion for Roger streamed forth, unabated. "Roger didn't see anything that he couldn't improve on, even if it was only in his own mind. But most of the time when Roger said something would work better if you did it this way, boy, you stood there and looked at it! Because ninety-nine times out of hundred it was true. The boy had the idea! He just *loved* inventors. They were number one. Anybody who was trying to make a new concept that would work, Roger was on that boat. He was the leader. He suggested pooling our money and going to where the big money was and tap it. He could convince us this was the way to go. He was persuasive."

When I'd finished taking photographs of the paintings, we returned to the living room. Les's eyes were still blazing. "Roger could get people to think what he was talking about, because he always had some kind of project. He was never without a project of some kind. Time meant nothing to Roger once he got on a project. He'd just liable to stay there for a month until he was finished."

I had to ask, "Was Bigfoot one of his projects?"

"Yes. That was his biggest one."

I hastily inserted a fresh tape, thoroughly caught up in Les's feelings, and with his permission, Pat began photographing him. "Roger thought a lot. He told me one time, 'You know, for about an hour before I get up in the morning, I wake up early, and I lay there for about an hour and plan my entire day in my mind. And from that I have a rough outline of what I plan to do, and in the end what I'm going to accomplish at day's end. You take a day at a time. Everyday I have some kind of plan.'"

Pat's camera clicked and whined, and silver flashes illuminated Les's face.

I turned Les's attention to memories of Bob Gimlin, Roger's partner at Bluff Creek. Gimlin came to a few rodeos, he recalled, as a pickup man or a horseman. Beyond that, Les hardly knew him. And as far as Jerry Merritt and the western town was concerned, Les remembered Roger taking Les to the town while it was under construction. Les claimed that Roger was involved in Merritt's project. As far as Bob Heironimus was concerned, "The name rings a bell, but I can't put a face to it. I've heard that name."

He turned the subject back to Roger. He said that Roger never missed an opportunity. "He never followed anybody. He believed that his own mind and his own intelligence and his own personality could survive under any conditions. I think he was one of the most fearless individuals I have seen." A rich baritone entered his voice, which rose a notch. "He was never, *never* afraid of anybody or anything, to my knowledge. I used to tell him when he was a little guy, 'Looking into your eyes is like looking into ten fathoms of deep water. You're not afraid of nothin', are you?' Roger said, 'Why should I be afraid?'"

Les's hypnotic description of Roger Patterson captivated me. For a moment I believed that Roger Patterson could actually have photographed a real Bigfoot, just based upon Les's description of his little brother's "genius."

But then Les said something that made me question Les's near idolatry of Roger.

"Roger showed his footage at the Smithsonian Institute. And he came back from the Smithsonian with a clean bill of health. He got nine or ten honorary degrees in anthropology after he produced this letter of credibility from the Smithsonian Institute. When he left there, the Smithsonian gave him a big, ol' plaque."

How did Roger Patterson, an unemployed high school graduate, former rodeo rider, failed inventor, and circus tumbler receive honorary degrees in anthropology from universities and colleges? It seemed very unlikely, and I had found absolutely no evidence of this in the information I had collected on Patterson. Any of the big-name Bigfooters—Green, Byrne, and Dahinden—would have loudly proclaimed this in their books and statements over the years; it would have added immense strength to Patterson's story.

"Can you show me the plaque?" I asked.

His eyes darted to mine. "Somebody's still got it. I saw it once."

I let the matter drop, and we returned to Les's memory of watching the famous footage at Roger's house. Roger narrated in a modulated tone, Les remembered. "'It's an old bitch,'" Roger said, as the two-legged creature with breasts strode across the screen. "'It's an old female. She's almost blind because most of them are nocturnal creatures primarily, and this thing was out in the daytime.'"

How did Roger know the Bigfoot was nearly blind, as he theorized most of the shy creatures were? There was absolutely no evidence of this in the Bigfoot literature. In fact, Bigfoot seemed to move at night with utter ease and always escaped the bullets of hunters during the day.

"That film really took him from all supposition to reality," Les said. "He thought with that film he was going to hatch something."

Roger wasn't just a genius Bigfoot filmmaker. He also had a temper, as Les explained. One day in Sand Point, Idaho, during a rodeo, Roger was walking down the sidewalk with Les and his other brothers. A car pulled up. Then men inside shouted epithets; they were loggers and they didn't like cowboys. "Roger said, 'You know, Les, those guys are ill-mannered,' and I said, 'Let it pass. They're just shooting off their mouth.' 'No,' Roger said. 'I think a guy should set these people straight.'"

Roger strode up to the car and started talking. Then, suddenly he laid his black hat on the top of the Mercury, yanked open the car door, then jumped in and "commenced to knock the hell out of all four of these guys," Les said. "He kicked 'em. Two of 'em he knocked out cold. One took off. The other he had around the neck, and he was crying bloody murder." Les grinned at the memory. "Roger was an extremely tough guy when he got into a physical confrontation. He could think faster and use every asset he had in his body from his head to his arms to his feet. He was so quick, those people didn't have a chance. We didn't have to help Roger. He did it all on his own. He wiped 'em out."

Roger the fighter. Roger the showoff. Roger who took no guff.

When all the brothers were boys, Les remembered, their mother was giving Roger a whipping with a willow switch when he wheeled around and snatched it from her. He broke it into little pieces and said, "That's the last time you're whipping me, Mama."

Roger in control, I thought.

Then I thought of Roger the ex-rodeo rider, having the luxury of lying in bed for an hour every day, planning, conceiving, mapping out his actions and the anticipated results. One of those results Roger planned was becoming a millionaire.

"He had to be doing something," Les said. "He had to be doing something. He had to be inventing something, building something."

Roger the self-made businessman.

And Roger, dying before he realized his full potential, the vastness of his riches.

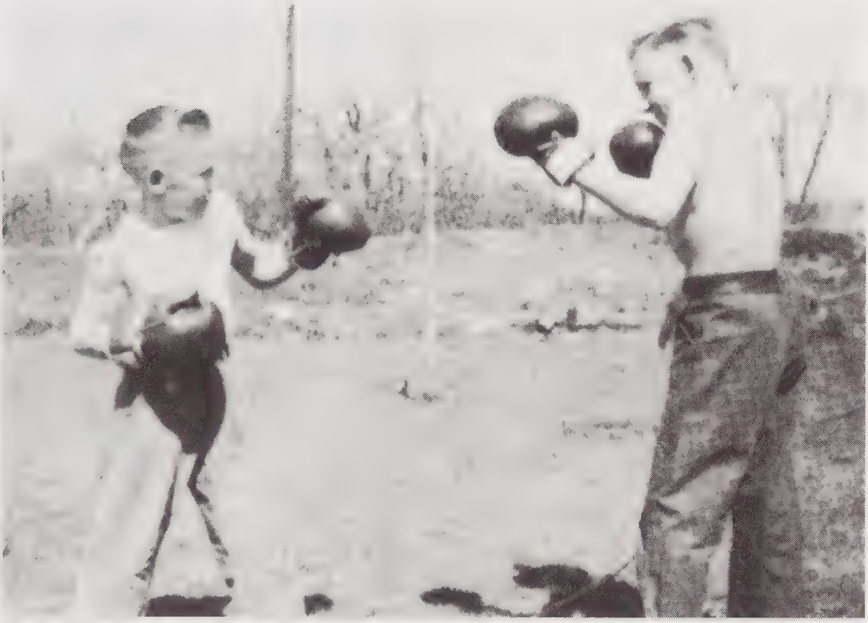
Roger Patterson learned to play the guitar, shown here at about age eight. Courtesy of Les Patterson.

The day before he died, Les, Loren, and Glenn visited their little brother in the hospital. "At one time Roger could arm-wrestle with those eighteen-inch arms of his. He could take on even a big guy like you. In them days this was how we made some of our money to get into rodeos. We liked to bet, so we'd match Roger to strong-arm boys in the particular town we was in. Roger looked up from his bed and said, 'You guys remember the day that I could take all three of you in a one-minute span, and put your arms to the ground?' 'Right. Yeh, Rog', we know. You were the toughest one of the bunch.' He smiled at us and said, 'One last time here I want to arm-wrestle you guys.'"

The brothers moved a little side table next to Roger's bed. His arms were nearly bone. "And everyone of us let him put us down, but he says, 'You're fakin' me, you guys. You guys are kiddin' me!' And he was pointing his finger right at me. 'You're kiddin' me. But you seen the time I could put you away!' I said, 'Oh, yeah, Rog'. We remember you.'"

Les looked at me as he told the story. His eyes were clear, without tears.

"Roger said, 'I'm out of here. And you guys know it.' He never cried. He never moaned, no whimper, nothin`! Just straight away. 'I'm a-goin' to another level.' That's the last kind of party that we ever had—Roger wanted to arm-wrestle us on his deathbed."



Roger Patterson (*left*) competed with his older brothers; here he is boxing. Courtesy of Les Patterson.

A deep sadness went through me. Arm wrestling—it seemed an empty, meaningless way for a dying man to say goodbye to his beloved brothers. . . .

I thanked Les for the interview and we started to get up. "Here, wait, I want to show you those photographs," Les said, and he hopped out of his chair. He pulled an album off a shelf and sat down between Pat and me. "Here's Roger when he was just a kid. He liked to play guitar. And here he is with us brothers. He's the little guy on top." He pointed to a young, slender figure. It was Roger doing a handstand, his hands joined to those of Loren who was holding Roger aloft.

As Les turned the pages, identifying everyone in the yellowing black-and-white photos, I sensed a sad longing for a time long ago. It was a time of world war and sacrifice, of the death of America's isolation, and her coming of age into a terrifying world of nuclear annihilation, a period when my mother and father were moving, as strangers, toward each other, through the space and time of their youth to later intersect, fall in love, and give me life at the end of that world war. Roger Patterson had come earlier than me, and the other Patterson brothers even earlier. I was reaching back with Les to find that moment in history when Roger Patterson had become who he was; a boy who had lost his father and had grown into his youth when I was just entering the world. I wanted to know Roger Pat-

Roger Patterson (*on top*) was a skilled acrobat. Courtesy of Les Patterson.

terson, deeply, to know why he became what he eventually became in his adulthood. "Les, can we borrow these photos and scan them?"

"Sure. As long as I get them back."

"You will."

Pat and I gathered our things up, and we each shook Les's hand.

Once inside the car, I said to Pat, "You know, I think I'm beginning to understand Roger Patterson."

She popped open a soft drink and handed it to me. As we refreshed ourselves as I drove, we reviewed the key points we knew so far, gathered from the Patterson brothers' interviews and the other interviews.

Roger Patterson was a short man, athletic, self-conscious of his body, dedicated to building himself up, and lived on herbs and natural remedies to stave off the cancer that was slowly eating him. Marked by poverty from his childhood, he couldn't slough off the poverty. After leaving the Army, he remained still on the edge of poverty. He ended up hauling cow manure. But that couldn't be a life's profession. Sport and entertainment, he concluded, were his best bet. He knew he had the ability to perform in front of crowds. He could sing; he could paint; he could use his imagination. This artistic bent got into his blood when he was a kid. As an adult, he knew he could work with his hands to create works of art and gadgets. But he wasn't making it. He sure wasn't getting rich from busting his body in rodeo. His wagons fizzled out. He tried inventing something he could sell, the "prop lock." But that didn't go anywhere either. It just wasn't happening. He was constantly searching for something. He didn't want to lose out, not in body or mind, not in this life. And he had a real temper. He didn't like those who opposed him or challenged him or hurt him. If he had the chance, he thumped 'em, busted 'em up. And he could talk, he knew that. That was, perhaps, his greatest talent. He was a damn convincing speaker. And he was a good salesman—he sold ideas and dreams. His brother-in-law, Al DeAtley recognized this. Al could see a good idea, and he took a chance on Roger. With Al, Roger went places. With Al, Roger would become big time. And he did.

We crossed the snow-splashed mountains. All around us, November of 1998 was coming to an end. Wetter and grayer, the Pacific Northwest was sliding deeper into the rainy season. Back in our apartment, the drumming rain put us into a reflective mood. I withdrew into transcribing tapes and picking through my mounting piles of notes. The information about Roger Patterson that was emerging was fascinating. A body and face had been put onto a cipher.

As I sat in the study and read and reread the notes and listened to the tapes, rain slapping the windows, I began to feel that Roger Patterson had the creative ability, the guts, and the deep, burning desire to pull off a really big Bigfoot hoax. But I needed to know more to prove that. Les Johnson had given me other names. Patterson's neighbors—people next door or near him, people who knew Patterson for years. I started transferring those names from the Johnson tapes onto a clean sheet of paper. Then I turned on the computer and clicked on the online phone directory.

As the screen icons flicked silently into place, I recalled Les Patterson's description of Roger Patterson's last days. Withered by disease, he'd still had the determination to arm-wrestle his brothers in the face of death. He never gave up, it seemed. Now, even from the grave, Roger Patterson had the power to pull me deeper into his life.

NOTE

1. John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Vancouver: Hancock House, Ltd., 1978), p. 118.

6

PATTERSON'S NEIGHBORS

I mean, he had a hell of a mind on him. He really did. But he just wouldn't work a steady job, he just wouldn't do that shit.

—George Dunn, speaking of Roger Patterson's work history

He [Roger Patterson] called the shots, and everybody jumped through the hoops.

—Patricia Falon

I phoned Jim Falon, a fifty-year-old cattle rancher who grew up on an eighty-acre ranch out of Wiley City near the Yakama Indian Reservation. Falon's first memory of his neighbor Roger Patterson was meeting him at a rodeo in 1957 when Falon was a nine-year-old team roper. When the two started traveling together to rodeos, Patterson always carried a guitar with him. Also, Patterson's paintings of horses in the Bigfoot hunter's house on Pioneer Street between South Tenth Avenue and South Third Avenue greatly impressed Falon; and he remembered a metal bar set up in Patterson's garage. "He had a set of little log chains with rings hanging down from it. He could put his little fingers in there and do ten pull-ups. He was tough!"

Jim Falon, a successful Yakima cattle rancher, met Roger Patterson when Falon was nine years old; Falon worked for Patterson for three summers. Photo by Greg Long.

In 1960, after about four years of rodeoing, Patterson was seized by an idea. He built two-wheel carts and bought angora goats in California. The goats had long, white, curly

Jim Falon drives Roger Patterson's wagon and ponies through the streets of Yakima in 1966. Courtesy of Jim Falon.

hair, and two-foot-long, twisted horns. Patterson trained the goats to pull the carts and even put shiny knobs on the horns. Kids paid a dime to ride in the carts. But Patterson soon tired of the goats, and he approached Harry Herring who owned H&H Meats, the largest meat packing house in Yakima, and offered to build three wagons to be used to advertise H&H Meats. In exchange, Herring would pay Patterson a wage and cover his expenses. Herring bought the idea, and Patterson built three wagons of different sizes, the longest sixteen feet. A stickler for detail, Patterson bought authentic wagon wheels with thirteen spokes. He also bought two dappled-gray ponies for each wagon, and later built team yokes. Patterson carried the wagons on a truck trailer hitched to the back of a two-ton truck in which he transported the ponies.

For three summers Falon helped Patterson drive the wagons in the parking lots of stores that carried H&H meats. Flags emblazoned with the H&H name hung on the back of each wagon. Mothers, who had come to shop, let their children ride in the wagons. "Kids were always around Roger," said Falon.

Patterson also drove the wagons in parades in central Washington towns, such as Wenatchee, Cashmere, and Spokane, and also on the coast. Herring paid Falon a wage, and Patterson paid for their meals and living expenses, "although sometimes," said Falon, "we slept in the truck."

When the "thrill" of parades and parking lot promotions faded, Patterson decided to sell the wagons. Herring bought them. Later, Falon's father, who managed the ten-thousand-head feed lot for H&H, bought the wagons when Herring sold his meat packing house to Swift. The wagons remained at the Falon house until 1987 when they were finally sold.

After the wagons, Patterson built a miniature stagecoach from scratch. Falon remembered him constructing a large, wooden frame that held a metal pan filled with boiling water. Into grooved slots in the frame, Patterson slipped in a bowed sheet of metal. Then, he placed a sheet of plywood on top of the sheet of metal and placed sacks of dirt on top. By heating the water in the pan, heat was transferred from the metal sheet to the plywood, and the weighted sacks pressed the softening wood onto the metal sheet where it bowed. In this way, Patterson formed the sides of the stagecoach. "It bowed just right," Falon said, "because he had to have it authentic." Patterson bought two, black Shetland ponies to pull the stagecoach. But, like all the other projects, Patterson eventually lost interest.

"He was a genius!" Falon proclaimed enthusiastically. "A genius can't stay with one thing all the time, you know. The moment they perfect it, or get it goin' good, they have to move on to something else. That's kind of what Roger was."

In 1966, after Falon graduated from high school, he lost track of Patterson. A year later Falon found himself in Vietnam, in the air assault ground infantry. When he returned home in 1968, Patterson and the Bigfoot film were the talk of the town.

"You know, if you want to know more about Roger, you ought to call George Dunn," Falon suggested. "He was one of Roger's next-door neighbors."

"Thanks for the lead," I said.

Sixty-year-old George Dunn was straightforward and congenial over the phone. He punctuated many of his answers with laughter. Retired, Dunn had worked thirty years as a surveyor and a county road inspector. He moved right next door to Patterson's small house located at 805 Pioneer Street in about 1958 when he was almost twenty-one. Patterson was five years older. He recalled that Roger rodeoed nearly every weekend during the summers, in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Patterson tried to teach Dunn how to ride broncs, but, "I was a very piss-poor student," he said with a laugh.

Roger had "more guts than the law allows," said Dunn. "I mean, there wasn't nothin' that guy wouldn't try. I mean, he was scared of *nothin'*. He could do anything he wanted and put his mind to, other than he did not want to work eight hours a day for somebody. He just could not take orders very good."

Roger did do a little roofing for a short period of time before Dunn met him, and sometime between 1958 and about 1963, Roger worked for a very brief period for his brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, who owned Superior Asphalt Company.

"So when it came to a profession, he really didn't have one?" I asked.

"Nope. He just was . . . I don't know . . . I don't know how he come up with all his money every now and then, but he would. In fact, one time, he went out to the dump, and here was this rubber raft out there. So he picked it up and brought it home and blowed it up and went and got some of that yellow paint and painted it up and put a sign out and sold it for seventy-five bucks. You know, that's the kind of crap he did. And you know, he'd get away with it."

I chuckled. I asked if Patterson's wife, Patty, helped with the income.

"Nope. She didn't work either. I know Al DeAtley loaned him money every now and then. See, he was workin' for Al, and then he'd quit because Al would want to work on a weekend, and Roger said, 'Bullshit, I'm goin' to rodeo. Hell with that.'"

Dunn remembered Roger building the carts and wagons. Before that, Dunn and Patterson hung around together two to three evenings a week. "We practiced riding bareback horses in the evening and on the weekends, 'til he started building those carts and stuff, and that left me completely out because I'm no carpenter." Patterson threw himself passionately into his wagon building. In addition to wagons, Patterson built a miniature stage coach. "He made the wheels and the whole nine yards. I mean, it was just like it was built years ago, except a miniature one. I mean it was perfect, the detail, everything."

The detail. It sounded like a Roger Patterson trait.

"Yes, it was unreal," he said, wonder in his voice.

And Roger could sing. "Just like Buck Owens," he said. "Sounded just like him. We used to go down to the bars, and he'd get up there and sing one or two songs."

"Do you remember the names?"

"Most of them were Buck Owens songs. Uh, what's that one he always sang? Uh, 'They're Gonna Put Me in the Movies.'"

"'Act Naturally,'" I corrected him. The song is sung from the perspective of a sad and lonely fool who knows he can become a big movie star by just acting as himself, naturally. The song fit Patterson perfectly.

"I heard he was a painter, too," I said.

"Yeah, he was an artist. A hell of an artist."

Then Patterson plunged himself into Bigfoot. Illness invaded Patterson's body. He fell behind on his house payments. He had to give up the house on Pioneer Street, and then he moved his family out to the South Fork of the Ahtanum Road.

Despite his illness, it didn't take long for Roger to believe in Bigfoot, Dunn remembered. Patterson and Bob Gimlin "were in cahoots there together, and anyway, they was gonna make a documentary of trailing him and everything else. He was gonna write a book, and all that stuff, on Bigfoot, is what he had planned."

Dunn himself didn't believe in Bigfoot. "He was always trying to convince me that it was real. I told Roger that I didn't believe in Bigfoot. I had hunted too many years and never seen one." Roger kept different sized plaster casts in a box in his garage as evidence, but Dunn would always tell Roger that he didn't believe "'cause I ain't never seen one."

Dunn recollected the time Patterson rolled into town, back from a field trip, with Bigfoot casts. He held them in front of Dunn and challenged, "Now, how can you deny it?" Another time, Patterson came over to Dunn's house after a trip to Oregon. He plunged his hand into his pocket and pulled out an envelope containing a handful of stinking, reddish-brown hair measuring three to four inches long. Patterson said he had found the hair where a Bigfoot had bedded down for the night. "That's how close I was to him," Patterson said.

Dunn would sometimes challenge Patterson: "'I think you're a con artist!' That used to piss him off. He said, 'I'm gonna catch Bigfoot and turn him loose on ya because you're a nonbeliever.'" Dunn goaded Patterson more than once, but—Dunn laughed—"I didn't do it too often 'cause he'd punch ya." Patterson never actually hit Dunn, but he saw Patterson "get upset pretty easy if somebody didn't believe what he was sayin'."

"How would he react when he got upset?" I asked.

"He was a son-of-a-bitch when he got upset. I mean, he'd fight, I mean if he had to. I mean, he'd call you down. He swore up and down that that film was legit. And now I can't get Bob Gimlin to talk to me about it. The film looks real to me, but I'm still a nonbeliever. I mean, I guess I'm from the 'show me' state, and I just don't believe that the damned thing's walkin' around, or else there'd be more sightings of it."

People talked behind Patterson's back, saying the film was a fake. "A lot of people have doubted him." He laughed. "Ninety-nine percent of the people."

"Most of the people in Yakima doubted him?"

"Yeah, most people doubted. A lot of people just thought he was a con artist."

"Because he made a lot of money off the movie?"

"Well, he didn't work. You know, he was an inventor, too. Just like the hula hoop." Dunn described one of Patterson's inventions, a metal ring taken off a wooden barrel that Patterson pushed with a forked stick.

I smiled. I remembered seeing pictures somewhere of kids in knickers rolling a large metal ring down the street with a stick. But wasn't that in the early part of the twentieth century?

"He had the damn thing right there, instead of putting it around your waist and using it as a hula hoop. He was an inventor, or tryin' to be. I mean, he had a hell of a mind on him. He really did. But he just wouldn't work a steady job, he just wouldn't do that shit."

"Anything stand out in your mind that you always remember about him?"

"I always had a good time with him."

Dunn recommended I call Bob Campbell, another neighbor of Patterson.

Five days later Campbell was talking to me on the phone. He had the mild, agreeable personality of a person who enjoyed well-established routines and was more than happy to live in quiet obscurity. He explained that after trying to make a living as a guide on horseback at Indian Creek at the Mount Rainier National Park, and then working at Howard Archery in Yakima making bows, he worked for decades for the post office until he retired. As a young man, he rodeoed for eight years trying to make a living. It was "chicken one day, feathers the next; living high on the hog, then broke." But those were the days—ridin' buckin' horses, bulls, and ropin' with Roger Patterson and the Patterson brothers. "Sleepin' under the truck when it rained, and starvin'. When we got broke, we'd go in bars, and Roger would try to get a match race with anyone in it for fifty yards. I've never known anyone in the world who could beat him in fifty yards. Rodeoin' and chasin' girls. It was lots of fun."

Campbell first met Patterson at Highland High School in Yakima, during a football game. Patterson was a linebacker. He snarled at Campbell, who was opposing him on the line: "Next time you carry the ball, I'm going to get you!"

The next time Campbell had the ball, he ran right over Patterson. After the game, Patterson said, "I never got hit so hard in my life. You really hit hard. You're good." From then on, Bob Campbell and Patterson were friends.

Campbell might have made a living rodeoing, but Patterson had it hard. "One winter things got tough, and so he took up painting. He was an artist, first class. He painted pictures and sold them 'til something would break, get some money, stash it up, do something. Another time he decided he was going to be a singer, so he bought a ten-dollar guitar. He learned to chord a bit, went into a tavern, and started playin' and singin'. He was a big hit. He was great."

For a time, Patterson took up boxing, and for awhile he was moving to the top in the region. Then suddenly Roger quit, and "Roger's manager just about went nuts over that."

"Did you ever help Roger financially?" I surprised him.

Suddenly, Campbell began stuttering. "No—I—you know—I would—no. I would loan him five bucks now or then, for gas, something like that."

After Patterson got interested in Bigfoot, he started visiting Campbell's house, which was next door, to share his latest project. He would talk and talk about how he was going to capture Bigfoot, and he'd outline his plans for his next field trip—what he'd need, what would work. "If I said, 'I don't think that's good, I don't think it will work,' we'd talk about it. He'd come back from one of his trips and tell me what all he found, and tell me what he was going to do to catch that sucker, and all his ideas to go about it. Sometimes we'd talk all night long. I was just kind of his sounding board, I think."

Campbell resisted Patterson's attempts to involve him in Bigfoot. "I told him he was wasting his time. He was never gonna catch a Bigfoot."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because they're creatures from outer space."

"Oh, really?"

"They're robots. They're sent down as probes." To prove it, Campbell cited the lack of Bigfoot bones and the absence of a den. Then Patterson came back from California with his Bigfoot footage. "He was so excited he could hardly stand himself."

What about Al DeAtley?

"Al gave him quite a lot of money," Campbell said.

What about Jerry Merritt and the western town?

"They thought they had a gold mine," Campbell replied.

Did Patterson have any connections to Hollywood?

"He went down and looked up Roy Rogers. He could walk right up to anyone, knock on the door, and say, 'Hi, I'm Roger Patterson.' Rogers invited him in. He spent the weekend with him, was a house guest."

For some reason, I doubted Patterson spent a weekend with Rogers.

"Did he tell you he was going to go down to Hollywood?" I asked.

"I'm sure he did. But when he started talking about Hollywood, he'd lose me."

Did he remember Patterson building a lookout tower to watch for Bigfoot?

"Not unless it was up at Tampico when he moved up there." Then Campbell started stuttering, catching himself. "I—I—you know—I'm not going to say he didn't but—I would be really dubious of that. I never knew about it. It don't sound like anything that Roger would do."

"Why do you think Patterson wouldn't do something like that, have a lookout tower?"

"No, he, uh, now—now unless he had a place where Bigfoot was active, you know." He spoke on, more hurriedly now. "I would be inclined to think he would build a little lookout, a little one up in a tree for deer hunting, you know, a blind." Campbell was flustered. "I'm sure he did put—as a matter of fact, I heard him talk about, uh, putting little deals up in a tree where he could climb up where he had been seeing them. I'm not sure—no." He laughed and came to a halt.

I debated whether I should press him further.

"What about stories of a man wearing an ape suit?"

He had heard guys talking about it in a bar, but he claimed he didn't know any of the people. "It's possible. Anyone can do any damn thing."

The subject turned to Patterson's death. Campbell remembered seeing Patterson one summer. Patterson was so weak he sometimes had to stop and rest before he could continue talking.

"He wrote his own obituary and recorded it," said Campbell. At the funeral at Shaw and Sons Funeral Home, recordings of several of Patterson's farewell songs were played, and then the assembly, more than two hundred people, listened to the taped obituary. "Just 'goodbye, it's time to go down the road, now don't no one feel sad,'" Campbell recalled. "It was awesome."

I was of a different mind. All the recordings might have been just a way for Patterson to attend, or control, his own funeral. Patterson was putting on a little show, his last performance. Even in death, he was the artist, the entertainer, and he drew quite a crowd.

"He was one of those unique guys who could talk to anyone," Campbell said. "He made friends."

"Did he want to be a Hollywood star?"

"No, no. All Roger wanted to do was promote Bigfoot. That was all he cared about. Personally, himself, it didn't matter. He was nothing. He didn't think of himself as great. He was very humble, he was never high on himself."

I found this statement hard to believe. From the collective portrait I was getting, Roger seemed to be mostly interested in himself, his own rules, and his own schemes to survive.

"Roger was unique." And a tone of adoration crept into Campbell's words. "He was honest. He was so honest. The guy was so honest. In all my life, I never knew him to tell a lie. He just absolutely didn't know how to tell a lie. That wasn't part of his makeup. *He was just plain honest.*"

I listened without comment, but then I asked him what he thought about the film footage.

"It's been quite a few years. It really wasn't important to me. It really wasn't a red-letter day."

Campbell seemed to remember so many things about Roger, but not that much about the film.

"People will question anything," Campbell said, defending Patterson. "Roger looked me in the eye and said he took the film. I never, ever, ever knew Roger to lie. I don't care how bad it was, he'd say, 'That's right, I did that.' I never knew him to cheat, steal, or lie."

"What about the western town out on Ahtanum Road?"

"I never knew everyone in it. But I—I—wasn't involved," he stumbled. "I—I'd watch them—they'd tell me all about their hopes, their dreams. I knew them all. They were all good friends of mine. But I never really—I never got involved in it."

He knew about Patterson's documentary, the film on the South Fork, and he knew of Prentis Beck, one of Patterson's earliest followers. "Oh, yes!" he said. Beck and Patterson were "serious believers. It was just like believing in God! It was religious with 'em."

And he even knew Patterson's jacket size (forty-four inches) and Patterson's waist (twenty-two inches). He knew about Patterson's book. "We were real close," Campbell said. "He kept me informed about everything he was doing."

He knew a lot, this Campbell. It was obvious that Campbell liked Patterson, even admired him. Curiously, though, he also seemed to be defending the ostentatious Bigfoot hunter while distancing himself from him. It was a tension belied by his periodic stuttering, as if he were hiding something.

"How would you sum up Roger Patterson?" I asked, seeing that the interview had come to a close.

"We talked," he said fondly. "He'd think of things. And Roger would go do it and make it work."

A few days later I called Patricia Falon, Bob Campbell's former wife and Jim Falon's sister. She had an upbeat, cheery voice, sounded sincere, and spoke plainly. It was in the summer of 1962 that she moved right next to Patterson's house. Bob Campbell, her husband then, had been rodeoing with Patterson for several years, so the Campbells and the Pattersons weren't strangers. And Patricia Falon had known Patty Patterson for some time.

Patterson had goats, chickens, and horses on his property, Patricia Falon remembered. Patterson would milk the goats, and he raised his children on goat's milk.

"He did art work. He did carvings," she enumerated. "Whatever he did, he seemed to be a perfectionist. He painted a lot of pictures. He would polish horns from cattle and bulls. He would carve the wood base to hold the horns and mount them. Everything had to be just right. Whatever he did, he did to the fullest extent. He built these little wagons. He had to have them so detailed." She remembered Patterson working from pictures of covered wagons.

Patterson trained his horses to walk round and round inside a wooden ring in his backyard. For Patricia, it was a novelty to see Patterson and his wagons and horses in local parades.

And what did Patterson do for a living?

"You know, when it comes right down to it, nobody seems to know. He kind of just existed. He survived. He did a lot of trading. He was kind of a horse trader in disguise. He rodeoed as well—somewhat. He never did have a job per se."

Patterson had a big, white Cadillac, she recalled. Funny, Jerry Beck had also remembered Patterson owning a Cadillac, but she remembered it as being black.

"How did Patterson afford the Cadillac?"

Patricia didn't know. She couldn't remember Patterson's wife, Patty, working, either.

Roger and Patty would often visit Patricia and Bob. The wives and the kids did things together while the husbands talked. Patterson did most of the talking. "Roger pretty much dominated a conversation," Patricia said. "Women were to be seen and not heard around Roger." She laughed at the memory. "He was very much the male chauvinist."

Patricia sometimes overheard the men's conversations. "If Bigfoot didn't come up when you came in the door, it came up soon after." Patterson had vast amounts of information to impart about Bigfoot. "He would pull all this stuff out. Anytime someone sighted or had something to say about Bigfoot, he'd copy it or get a copy of the article from the paper. He had all kinds of evidence. And I know that's what he was trying to do. He was trying to convince everybody that this is something that's for real out there."

"Was he trying to convince your ex-husband of the existence of Bigfoot?" I asked.

She thought for a moment. "I think anybody who had any doubt at all, Roger'd talk your leg off to try to convince you. If you doubted, then he was going to do everything imaginable to convince you Bigfoot existed." Several times Patterson brought out a Bigfoot cast to show Bob. It impressed Patricia, but she didn't believe, and she soon tired of Patterson's constant Bigfoot talk.

Patterson the salesman.

"I never believed him. I don't know why I didn't. I just—I don't know. He just never, ever convinced me." Eventually, she tried to avoid conversations with Patterson. "I'm not an arguing person." She laughed. "That's where him and Bob could just go for hours and hours, because they'd argue and argue and go 'round and 'round, and Roger'd prove to him, or try to prove to him, 'This is what I've got.' If you were an arguing-type person, then you could sit down for hours with him."

No one ever challenged Patterson. "He called the shots, and everyone jumped through hoops. He was a cocky guy. He was like a little bantam rooster, a cocky little character." Patterson impressed her, but I could see it wasn't admiration.

"There was only one Roger. Did you ever go see Marty Robbins the singer? When I see Marty Robbins, I think of Roger. Because he just had that little rooster—little, banty rooster—the cock-of-the-walk. That's just the way he was. He was a fun guy to be around as long as you did it Roger's way."

Speaking of roosters, Patterson and Bob once shot a rooster and brought it to the Campbells to be cooked. Patterson announced that Patty would clean it. When Patterson left the kitchen, Patty told Patricia that she couldn't stand cleaning the rooster; it made her sick. "Don't worry, Pat, I'll do it!" Patricia had cleaned chickens since she was a girl. Later, though, Roger came back into the kitchen and threw a fit. "'You get out of that sink! Pat's cleaning that rooster!'" And he forced his wife to clean it.

"He was very domineering over women. It had to be his way. He was flighty, hyperactive, nervous. He was like a little, banty rooster."

I asked her if she remembered Patterson going down to California *before* October 20, 1967. She pondered my question, then replied that she and Bob had driven out to Tampico to visit the Pattersons in 1966 or early 1967 where the Pattersons were now living. The Campbells had already moved in October 1965 to another part of town.

On this visit, Roger had returned from a trip to California. It was before the film was shot. "He was all hyped up because he had been close to a Bigfoot," Patricia remembered. "'They were close,' seemed like they 'had been close or gotten closer.' Roger was loud, animated. He had so much enthusiasm, he had so much anxiety, that he was going to get this thing, he was going to capture this thing!"

"Are you sure it was before the footage?"

"I'm sure. He was so keyed up about it. He just *knew* he was getting closer."

If true, Patterson's behavior, as reported by Patricia, was provocative. The Bigfooters claimed that Patterson had stumbled onto the Bigfoot at Bluff Creek by accident; he was just a fortunate guy. But I had never read a single report that Patterson, or any of the old Bigfooters such as Green or Dahinden—or even anyone in the Bluff Creek area—had ever gotten close to seeing or capturing a Bigfoot. It was always Bigfoot *tracks* they found. Could Patterson's excitement upon his return from California have been the result of clever planning, that is, establishing a history of his "expeditions" to search for the creature and priming his audience, all in preparation for the famous filming to follow?

The Campbells remained friends with the Pattersons, although the couples began to drift apart when Bob started working at the post office. After the Bigfoot film, the Campbells didn't see much of Patterson anymore until five months before his death.

I asked Patricia about her lasting memories of Patterson. "He always dressed nice," she said in a cheery voice. "He always wore a cowboy hat. He always kept his hair combed nice. He always wore western shirts and jeans and boots. You never caught him in a pair of shorts. You'd never catch him in a T-shirt without a collar. He had a black hat. He must have had two or three black hats—one for when he was outside doing his work with goats and stuff. When he went anywhere he always dressed nice." I could hear a smile in her voice. "He was a typical cowboy."

I thanked her and hung up. As planned, I had now interviewed Patterson's neighbors when he was living in Yakima. Les Johnson had also recommended that I talk to Patterson's neighbors from the Tampico area.

Les had given me the name of a ranching family living on the western end of Ahtanum Road. I contacted the family and was invited to visit. Several weeks later Pat and I were sitting in one of their trailers filled with farm implements. Facing us were two long-time residents of Tampico, a seventy-one-year-old man and his middle-age son. Dressed in working clothes, the father and son had come in from the pasture. The men requested anonymity, although they allowed me to tape record my interviews of them. I use pseudonyms here—Warren, the father, and Tim, the son.

Tim opened, saying, "I probably met Patterson about one time. It was when Dad and I went up and we cornered him because we'd heard that he was going in our pastures with hounds and supposedly looking for Bigfoot. I don't know if they were making a movie tracking Bigfoot, or just running the hounds and showing off to somebody. But we got wind, and we went up and confronted him and told him not to be doing that." Tim was ten at the time. "I distinctly remember standing in front of him, and he denies this thing. I could tell, as close-mouthed as he was about it, that there'd been something goin' on, and he was probably surprised that we were on to him. But basically there was just complete denial."

Warren told Patterson, "'You're not going to be doing that [trespassing].'" Patterson's reaction, Tim remembered, was "just kind of like water off a duck's back." Tim, having already learned the responsibilities of ranching at a young age, looked Patterson over and decided to do nothing. "Those kind of people don't impress me. To me, I'm impressed with right and wrong and producing something."

I turned to Warren. "For all the time you've lived here, have you ever seen Bigfoot?"

He snorted in disgust. "God, no! Jeez, you perpetrate a hoax like that, you know, and it becomes nationally known. Just absolutely ridiculous." He said that two of his uncles who had lived in the area their whole lives had never seen Bigfoot or any tracks. "If my uncle John and George [pseudonyms] could hear that crap, you know, they'd turn over in their graves. It's absolutely asinine."

"The guy that was in the monkey suit was running around at the taverns and bragging about it," Tim said.

"Now, you would probably know the name of this man?" I asked.

"Bob Heironimus?"

"That's the name I've heard," I said.

"Bob Heironimus spilled the beans in the tavern, and it made the circuit around the valley." Tim smiled. "He was Bigfoot in that movie. That was the scuttlebutt that was goin' around, and it was pretty strong. It never wavered."

Warren asserted that Heironimus had worn an ape suit "for Roger Patterson's particular purposes," and he suggested that Pat and I go up the road and talk to a man who "would talk openly about this thing."

First, to satisfy our hunger, we joined Warren and Tim for hamburgers at the Tampico Restaurant located next to the Tampico Store. An hour later we parted ways and in minutes knocked on the door of a small, nondescript trailer set off from Ahtanum Road. Inside the close, dark interior we shook hands with a soft-spoken, slight, elderly man sitting on a tiny bed in an alcove. From a wall calendar, Jayne Mansfield smiled seductively at us. On a little nightstand next to him were needles and vials of insulin. "I'm diabetic," he said.

"My wife is also," I said.

"You can tape me, but I don't want you to use my name," he said in a quiet voice.

The red light on my recorder glowed brightly in the dim light. "What can you tell me about Roger Patterson?" I asked.

"I don't know anything good I can say about him," Marvin (a pseudonym) replied matter of factly.

Marvin told me he had moved to the Tampico area in 1960. Later, Patterson and his family moved into the house next door. Marvin didn't remember any conversations he had with Patterson, although he recalled that Patterson came over one day and asked to use his phone. Marvin didn't realize Patterson racked up long-distance calls on his phone. When Marvin's bill came in, it was *seven hundred dollars*.

When he confronted Patterson with the bill, Patterson said he couldn't afford to pay it. Later on, Marvin confronted Patterson again. "No, he wasn't going to pay it," he remembered Patterson telling him bluntly. "I was angry, but what could I do?" After that, Marvin didn't let Patterson come into his house again.

"How did Patterson survive?"

He searched his memory. "I can't remember." He said Patterson was always working on something at his house, although Marvin had no interest in Patterson's activities. One day, however, Patterson drove an old van, like a bread van, onto Marvin's driveway. Patterson wanted to show off the van, and he opened the back doors. Peering inside, Marvin spied two pairs of chains and shackles hanging from the walls. A winch was bolted onto the floor at the front of the van. Patterson told Marvin that when he caught Bigfoot, "he'd tie him up in the van. He figured he'd have to winch him in."

"Was Patterson trying to convince you that Bigfoot existed?" I asked.

"Why, sure," he laughed softly.

As a logger who had worked twenty years in the nearby mountains, Marvin had never seen one of the hairy giants.

Patterson drove his van onto Marvin's driveway on another occasion. "He opened up the van door." Marvin looked inside, and he saw, amid a pile of "stuff," a wooden carving of a Bigfoot's foot.

I squinted at Marvin's eyes in the dim light, looking for a sign that his memory was correct. If he had remembered correctly, here could be evidence that Patterson was faking Bigfoot.

"Are you sure you saw a wooden Bigfoot print?" I asked.

He said that he only saw the heel of the foot. He was certain, however, that photographs in Patterson's book weren't taken at Mount St. Helens where Patterson stated he went on a Bigfoot expedition. They were actually taken near a creek across from Patterson's house. He said he knew this because one day when he was looking inside a copy of Patterson's book, his wife, who happened to be Jerry Merritt's sister, personally told him that she took that particular photo for Patterson. In fact, she used Marvin's camera. Marvin's wife had been spending a lot of time with the Pattersons. Roger Patterson, Patty Patterson, and Marvin's wife and daughter were at the creek. The photograph shows Patterson sitting in front of a robust campfire. The campfire was actually created by squirting lighter fluid on a smaller fire to "flame it up," Marvin said.

Marvin was quite cynical about Patterson, although his words had a humorous flavor to them, as if the passage of the years had mellowed him. He was quite aware of Jerry Merritt and his ghost town. His wife frequently bought groceries for the Merritts, who were having financial difficulties. Whenever Marvin accompanied his wife to Merritt's house, Merritt talked about how he was going to make movies. Marvin believed that Merritt and Patterson were trying to make "a fast buck."

He said softly, "I just tried to turn them off and not have anything to do with them. I just let everything go in one ear and out the other."

"How would you sum up your experience with Patterson, that little part of your life?"

He dwelled on my question. The gray light in the trailer illuminated his soft, sickly features. "You couldn't trust him."

Pat and I thanked him and headed east on Ahtanum Road back to Yakima, then outside town accelerated onto Highway 97 for home.

The background of Roger Patterson's life was taking form, like one of Patterson's wagons, piece by piece—screws, nuts, planks, all joining together to show a poor man who refused to work a steady job, creative, artistic, imaginative, often hot-tempered, self-centered, and into movie-making.

Thoughts of intrigue, conspiracy, and deceit scampered through my head. I had to get to the bottom of Patterson and what he'd been up to in the Ahtanum Valley. I had uncovered a pattern of suspicious activities.

If nothing else, Patterson totally intrigued me. I wanted to learn more, maybe ultimately figure out all his inner workings. He was in the clutches of Bigfoot. And it seemed for money. He was also dying of cancer. Why would he further damage his health, as so many of his neighbors believed, in a fruitless pursuit? Images of Patterson, the sights and sounds of the Ahtanum Valley, and the faces of the witnesses I had interviewed poured over my thoughts.

"Pat, I've got to write a book," I said in excitement. "Roger Patterson is just *too fascinating* not to write a book. Who knows what more we're going to dig up?"

She peeled the cellophane wrapper off a box of crackers and then popped open a diet soda. "It *is* fascinating," she said.

I bit into a cracker. "Who knows where these interviews will lead? If we're persistent, the truth will finally emerge."

"Honey, I'll support you in your writing." Pat touched my shoulder.

"If we don't do it, no one will. Eventually a lot of these witnesses will die. They're aging fast."

Two hours later, we glided onto 148th Street in Bellevue and were immediately sucked into the clogged, stop-and-go traffic that torments every driver in the region. Our trips to Yakima were life-giving. We enjoyed the sparse traffic of the Ahtanum Valley and the vast, endless blue skies of the high desert of eastern Washington.

With the information I now had, the time was ripe to make the next phone call. It would probably mean another trip. But this time we would go south, down to the outskirts of Vancouver, Washington.

After taking a few days to reorganize our lives and to return to the routine of everyday living, I picked up the phone one evening to call Jerry Merritt. He was looming large in my mind. I knew that he and Patterson had been close friends. And both men had been involved in entertainment enterprises. Both had wanted to make movies. I punched in his phone number and wondered what surprises were in store for Pat and I.

7

JERRY LEE MERRITT

Roger was trying to make a documentary of his search for Bigfoot. I worked with him on it. I was working with him on speculation stuff, to make money.

—Jerry Lee Merritt

As I listened to Jerry Lee Merritt's phone ring, I reviewed my strategy: I would focus on his fabricated western town first. If I brought up Patterson too quickly, I might scare him off. A woman answered, then called Merritt to the phone. "Mr. Merritt," I began, "I'm writing a book that contains some of the history of the Yakima area. I understand you once owned a western town out in the Ahtanum Valley."

"That's right," and Merritt started talking, rapid fire, in a country twang, falsetto and childlike. Obviously, I could tell, he was a man limited in education but completely free in his expression and totally at home with himself. He was like a wild stallion racing. During his twenty-minute outpouring about himself and his western town, he often touched on the subject of Roger Patterson. "He was tryin' to make a documentary on his search for Bigfoot. I was ridin' a horse and doin' the

Jerry Lee Merritt, a rockabilly songwriter and guitarist, was a childhood friend of Roger Patterson. This photograph was taken sometime in the late 1960s. Courtesy of Jerry Lee Merritt.

cowboy thing in the movie. Roger went crazy when he took the film. He didn't expect it to happen. He had found what he was actually looking for. I actually believe he was telling the truth." My phone receiver vibrated with his laughter: "I could tell you stories about Roger Patterson that could *drive you up the wall!*"

Here was my opening. I asked him if he could grant me a face-to-face interview. Instantly, Merritt backed away, suspicion in his voice. "Most interviews I do only last fifteen minutes. People who write about music history. I don't know."

I persisted. I wanted only one hour. Finally, he relented. He gave me instructions to his house in Washougal, Washington, about fifteen miles east of Vancouver. He also gave me his Web site address.

Before Pat and I set off in the car for Washougal at the end of November, 1998, I reviewed all the facts about Merritt that I culled from his impassioned monologue and the Rockabilly Hall of Fame Web site where he had been inducted in 1997.

In 1943, when he was a boy, Merritt moved with his family from Arkansas where he was born to the Yakama Indian Reservation. The family began picking fruit in the fields. In the winter Merritt lived with the Yakama Indians at Dry Creek in Satus country where he and the Yakamas ran together and caught wild horses. In school, as he stared out the window and watched the wild horses galloping up Ahtanum Ridge, he daydreamed about becoming a cowboy. At fifteen his dream came true when he started working for ranches in the Yakima Valley. He quickly established a name for himself and the ranchers trusted him. Before that, however, at age ten, Merritt met Patterson one day when he visited his cousins who lived near Patterson in Wide Hollow west of Yakima. Patterson was lifting weights with Merritt's cousins. Patterson invited Merritt to start rodeoing with him and Patterson's brothers. Merritt quickly joined them, riding bareback in local rodeos. In 1953, at the age of nineteen, Merritt joined the Army the same day as Patterson. An infantryman, Merritt spent his time in France or in Czechoslovakia. Patterson was in special services as an acrobatic entertainer and traveled with an Army acrobatic team all over Europe to entertain the troops.

In 1955, Merritt was honorably discharged. He married, but he was broke. With barely an eighth grade education, he couldn't find a job—until he met the owner of a "filthy joint," the Stockmen's Café, in Yakima, a rough place where drovers and buckaroos came to eat the best rib eye steak in the country. The owner had no jobs, but he invited Merritt to come back later to play the mandolin, which Merritt could modestly pluck. Necessity is the mother of invention, so Merritt returned and debuted at the Stockmen's on the evening of July 4, 1955. After that, Merritt never stopped playing, up to six instruments, wrote songs, and sang.

Soon Merritt formed a band, Jerry Lee and the Pacers, which became a hit in Yakima. In 1956 Merritt entered the music industry as a lead guitarist, finding himself in the company of a hundred famous rockabilly artists, among them Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Bo Diddly, and the Everly Brothers. But the most famous of the rockabilly stars was Gene Vincent with whom Merritt played and recorded throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. It was Gene Vincent who sang "Be Bop a Lula," considered by some as one of the greatest rock 'n' roll songs ever written. *Rolling Stone* magazine has called Gene Vincent & The Blue Caps "the first rock 'n' roll band in the world." In 1959 Merritt wrote and recorded with Vincent "She She Little Sheila," which topped the charts for twenty-two weeks, and for which Merritt received a gold album from Capitol Records. Merritt toured Japan with Vincent in the first rock 'n' roll tour in that country. Vincent ended up spending the rest of his career in Europe, serving as an inspiration to the Beatles, until 1971, when, living in obscurity, he died in a tragic automobile accident. Jerry Lee Merritt had played with one of the truly great rock 'n' roll stars.

One of the facts I stumbled upon on the Web site was "Buffalo Grass," a song written by Merritt and *Prentis Beck!* Prentis Beck was one of Patterson's first followers. Here was an odd connection—Bigfoot belief and song writing.

I also noted that in 1964 Merritt wrote and recorded "Hollywood & Vine" and "L.A." A photograph on the Rockabilly site showed Merritt with his Hollywood manager, Vito (Buddy) Motola, sitting at a table covered with drinks in the Beverly Hills Hotel at the ASCAP Writer's Convention waiting to receive an award. The date was 1966–1967. Merritt had boasted to me over the phone that the Writer's Convention was "*big time!*" Then, strangely, as Merritt's career began to soar, he plummeted and broke his ties with Hollywood. He ended up in his old hometown of Yakima where he bought a five-acre farm. That was when he started a record label, Tell International Records, and began managing Merritt and Norman Music BMI.

All the years Merritt had been in Hollywood, Patterson was writing his Bigfoot book, and—I suspected—in 1967 began concocting the idea of a Bigfoot documentary. With Merritt now back home, Merritt's ambitions intersected with his childhood friend's dreams.

With these facts tucked safely inside a folder, Pat and I started out for Merritt's house under a cold, gray sky. As we drove, I planned how I would overcome any resistance from him. Earlier that day he had tried to cancel the interview, using the excuse that he was a Jehovah's Witness and Sunday would be extremely busy. We parked and walked up to the front door of his modest house. A redwood sign bolted right above the door proclaimed: "As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah. Joshua 24:15." A rockabilly artist and a Jehovah's witness—it seemed an odd combination, as if Merritt, obviously full of wild energy, needed a strict religion to control his creative impulses or give direction to his life.

The door opened, and a small man in his sixties, in comfortable slacks, a plain shirt, and sporting a shock of smooth, black hair—clearly a toupee—looked up at me. He had a cheery expression. Instantly, I thought of Patterson who was, from all accounts, about the same size as this smiling man. I saw no signs in this boyish face of the earlier suspicion I had sensed in his voice. He could pass as a pleasant, average person in the streets, not a former lead guitarist to some of the

Looking down "Main Street" of Dry Gulch, Jerry Merritt's "western town," late 1960s. The western town had eighteen buildings and was to be used as a movie set. Courtesy of Jerry Lee Merritt.

world's great rock performers. He ushered us down a narrow hallway into a small, cramped bedroom studio. On a table sat a mixing system and a computer. Tacked on the walls were album covers, almost every one depicting Gene Vincent. Some highlighted Merritt's name.

We sat down on small chairs with my knees almost touching the aging star. His face had changed, hardening a little, and he told me he could talk only for a few minutes. My spirits sank, but I fixed on my strategy. I'd talk about him first, and if he warmed up, then hopefully he would freely open up about Patterson. The tape recorder started rolling.

In his down-home, Arkansas voice, Merritt went over his life again for me. I picked up new facts. He would be sixty-five on Christmas day. Back in 1956, a year after his start at the Stockmen's Café, his band Jerry Lee and the Pacers played at the Armory in Yakima where Merritt met Pat Mason, a booking agent to country and rock stars, including Gene Vincent. Mason would later hook Merritt up with Vincent and would remain Merritt's agent for eight years. Mason, now ninety-two years old, lived in Seaside, Oregon. Merritt's Hollywood music career started blossoming when he lived with Gene Vincent in West Covina for four months in 1959 after their Tokyo tour. After recording "Hollywood & Vine"

The remnants of Jerry Merritt's western town in 1998, when Greg Long visited the former movie set. Photo by Pat Long.

in 1964, Merritt signed with American Records, only two days after he had moved back to California's music capital.

"I really had a good deal," his voice rang with enthusiasm. "They paid for everything. My suits came from Giorgio's in Beverly Hills." With his wife and his sons, Merritt lived in Hollywood for over a year.

This dreamstate would fade, however. "I just got tired of Hollywood. I wasn't gettin' anywhere," he said ruefully. "I was cuttin' a lot of records, but they wasn't releasin' anything. I was about to starve to death sometimes, you know, walkin' them streets tryin' to get a job." That's when the Merritts moved to Yakima and settled on the five-acre farm.

Merritt remembered buying the farm in 1966. He and his family lived in the four-thousand-square-foot, cinder-block house that butts up against the slope of Ahtanum Road near Lynch Lane, where Mike Fairchild now resided. "The house looked like an old barn," Merritt said. It was after Merritt bought the land and the house that the idea of building a western town came to him. "I just one day said, 'Why don't I do somethin' just *really crazy* and build a town to make some money.' And so I did."

The town sprang up on the acreage behind his house on the other side of a little creek Merritt named Dry Gulch because the Yakama Indians would regularly shut the water off to it on July 15 and turn it back on October 15. Merritt and his friends cut, sawed, hammered, rebuilt old shacks, and trucked in the structures on flatbeds. "A lumber company donated lumber," Merritt recalled. "It escalated into more money and this and that."

Eventually eighteen buildings and false fronts stood on the property. The biggest building was two-storeys high and measured twenty by thirty feet. The town featured a Mexican restaurant and a concession stand and a dress shop and a grocery store. "You could *actually* buy groceries," he chuckled. "There was an old school with desks and a bell, a blacksmith shop, a collector's rock shop, honky-tonk piano, and a stagecoach. We had an Indian village—teepees—at the edge of the town. We had twelve gunfighters. Gunfights every hour. Wyatt Earp-type things."

Merritt discovered that "the work was way more than the money was." The lifetime family memberships were twelve dollars each, and the annual fees were only three to four dollars a year. "We charged fifty cents a head to get in. We should have charged three to four dollars back then. It was just outrageously too cheap. We furnished them more entertainment than they could have ever got free, you know. It was a bunch of actually poor people tryin' to make it, is what the whole thing was. It was our own bad management is what it was," he said, crestfallen. "We furnished food for three or four days during Christmas. We had two thousand people at a time. Cars were lined up one to two miles.

"I wanted to create a sense of the real West," Merritt went on, nostalgically. "After everyone left, my wife and I would go over to the town. I think that was the most enjoyable time I had out of it. We wired the whole thing with underground wire, and old lanterns up in the windows—lights—just like the real thing. We had underground speakers for the town for the music, or whatever, a PA system, and we'd hit that big switch at night, and that old town was alive and just looked like it was back in the past. We had a huge studio in my house. We ran sound from the studio out over to the town. Tapes, music, all that stuff. I never been to a movie town or nothin' like that in my entire life!"

Soon the town also had a bandstand and live music, and he started flying actors up from Hollywood. The first time it was a charity benefit for a boy who needed a kidney transplant. Merritt's manager contacted Ted Michaels who brought with him James Drury of the TV show *The Virginian*, and Robert Fuller. "He used to be on *Wagon Train* or *Rawhide* or somethin' as a scout," Merritt recollected.

The city of Yakima and travel agencies paid the actors' expenses. "I have a picture where I'm with them in limousines comin' out," Merritt smiled. "It was quite a thing. We had police escorts all the way out, sirens goin' and everything."

Support for the western town from the city of Yakima didn't last long. "They [city officials] came out and tried to shut us down so many times you can't believe it. And then they couldn't come up with nothin'. They'd say, 'What is it?' I'd say, 'You figure it out. What do you think it is?' They'd say, 'Shack town.' I'd say, 'Well, if that's what you want to call it, go ahead. I say it's a movie prop.' Now, one guy sat up on a hill for three days with a big ol' book and stuff, but Yakima had no codes on it. He was really frustrated. So I was kind of a rebel out there."

Merritt showed no sign of flagging. Fluid, melodic energy flowed through his voice.

"I went to college on the G.I. Bill and took TV production and cinematography at Yakima Valley College. I needed all of the knowledge and expertise I could get. I helped run the PBS TV station KYVE for two years. Our intentions were to do a major film at the town, but we never did, although I shot footage for a western movie at the town. Took a week or two. Washington State came over. They were there for three or four days shootin'. The University of Washington came over, too. *Gunsmoke* was even going to do a thing there. But we were doin' a snow scene, and then the snow all melted off, so we lost that deal. Roger wanted to build a Bigfoot thing down there, and I didn't want it there. He built this tower," Merritt said, his expression turning serious, "a lookout thing up in a tree, and it broke, and if anyone would have been in it, it would have killed 'im."

"To wait for Bigfoot to show up?" I asked slowly.

"Right."

"And he wanted to put it there in the town?" I said. "As an attraction?"

"Yeah. Well, he. . . . When the Bigfoot thing broke in California, my place was the headquarters. That's where it broke at. It wasn't at Roger's. Roger ran his phone bill up so high. . . ."

Ah, I'd heard it before—Roger broke, with others left to pay the bills.

"That was the first story, *Argosy* magazine," continued Merritt. "It was done right there. I was gettin' calls in, from Dr. Leakey, and all these people from all over the world."

"There was a kind of Bigfoot headquarters?"

"That was it. There was a Bigfoot headquarters."

Merritt didn't know who all the callers were or how important they were. "They wanted to know things, and Roger wasn't there all the time." Merritt took messages, and when Patterson stopped by, Roger returned the calls.

"So he was working out of your house?"

"Yeah, yeah! That was it." It started coming back to Merritt. "A guy named Prentis Beck, and Bob Gimlin."

Then suddenly, he blurted, "I was supposed to have a part of it, and I didn't get *nothin'* out of it. I went to Hollywood. I was the one who set up the copyrights for it, the original copyrights." He said proudly, "I'm the guy who set it up."

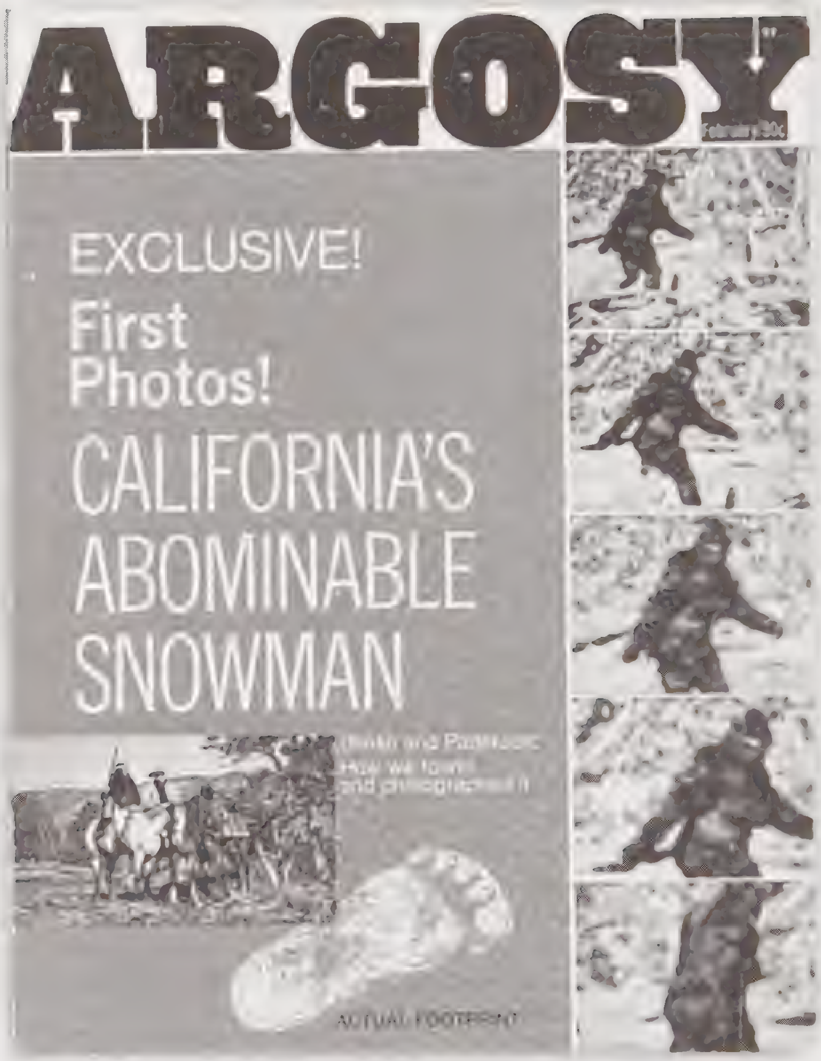
My heart thumped. Copyrights? Did Merritt travel *back* to Hollywood, the film capital of the world? When did *this* happen?

I swallowed hard. "Copyrights for the film?" I asked.

"The Bigfoot name, not the film. See, that name had never even been used."

Remarkable, I thought. Patterson wanted to legally protect his investment in Bigfoot.

I reminded Merritt that the name "Bigfoot" had first been used in 1958, in a


ARGOSY
February 50c
EXCLUSIVE!
First Photos!
CALIFORNIA'S ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN
Gimlin and Patterson:
How we found
and photographed it
ACTUAL FOOTPRINT

Cover of the February 1968 issue of *Argosy* magazine, a popular "men's magazine." Bob Gimlin, in full Indian costume, appeared with Roger Patterson on the cover.

newspaper in Northern California. "Well, anyway," Merritt countered, "we're talkin' about 'Bigfoot' the commercial name."

"Right."

"So I took Roger. . . . We went to L.A." There they met with Merritt's former publicity agent and a music attorney. "A big music lawyer," Merritt said, "Walter Hurst. He did Dean Martin, he did Sonny & Cher, all of them. So Walter did the contracts. I took Roger there, and we filed it. Then later they went to New York."

Who were "they" who went to New York, I wondered.

"I had a publicity agent. His name was Jack Oliphant. He was from Scotland or England. But anyway, they went to New York and set up a big fancy hotel with a cocktail party. The works. To get these big people involved. And Bob Gimlin was dressed up like an Indian walkin' around with moccasins on, the Indian band thing around his head." He smiled wryly. "Nobody showed up."

Now this was fascinating. Merritt had offered his own publicity agent, Oliphant, to help Patterson and Gimlin (and Al DeAtley?) to entice investors to buy into their Bigfoot project. I remembered seeing in my Bigfoot collection Gimlin on the cover of the February 1968 issue of *Argosy* magazine, which carried the first big story on the Bluff Creek footage. *Argosy*, according to Bigfoot historians, provided the first major piece of publicity describing the amazing find. There sat Patterson and Gimlin on horseback. And Gimlin, who was supposedly part Apache, was actually dressed up in Indian costume, playing a role: the expert Indian tracker. In full Indian regalia, he even wore feathers, all staged, all orchestrated to project an image. I remembered my first informant who had seen a man dressed up like an Indian sitting in a truck outside his store.

Merritt leaned forward and under his breath said, "Nobody even knows this story but you, right now. Nobody showed up at the cocktail party."

Merritt rushed on before I could ask the date of the event.

"At the time, I was playin' in a place called The Corral with a guy named Dean Carter. We had a double show goin'. That's when they went to New York." Merritt's gentle-looking face suddenly hardened. His eyes narrowed, then flamed with anger. "I didn't know they was goin' down there, and I really blew up about that one. Because they went to New York, and they didn't ask me to go!"

Merritt squirmed in his chair, seething, but he was also revealing a great deal on his own. I was eager to hear more about Merritt and Patterson's trip to Hollywood to copyright "Bigfoot." I decided to let Merritt reveal more facts about this on his own.

"We're kind of getting into Roger Patterson," I said quietly.

"Yeah," Merritt said. "I was in Hollywood in '66. Roger came down. Roger was an inventor. He was always doin' crazy things, and he had some kind of little thing that he had invented—a hoop, like in the old days of pushin' it up and down the street. He was on Sunset Boulevard pushin' that thing everywhere, and he wanted me to back him or help him with promotion. I was too tied up. I couldn't do nothin'."

Here were more images of Roger: Patterson and his hoop; Patterson looking for a marketer, a partner, an investor; Patterson wanting to make money—preferably using somebody else's money to get there.

To help Merritt's memory, I put several events in chronological order—Patterson and his friend Rod Thornton went to Northern California in 1964, made some casts there, returned to Yakima, and in 1966, after collecting newspaper stories about Bigfoot, Patterson produced a book. Then on October 20, 1967, he shot the famous footage.

"Roger was trying to make a documentary of his search for Bigfoot," Merritt said. "I worked with him on it. I was working with him on speculation stuff, to make money. I was supposed to go down to Northern California when he filmed Bigfoot. I didn't go. I was busy. I was working on the town at the time. I didn't want to go, because I went to Hollywood with him, and we had been doing this and that, doing different things, you know."

I was so surprised that my heart thumped. The accepted story was that only Patterson and Gimlin went to California, that they never considered bringing anyone else along.

"He was really mad because I wouldn't go with him. Early in the morning. Horses in the rig, wantin' me to go with 'em. And I'd already told—" He caught himself. "I said, 'Roger, I'm *not* goin' to go.' It was bad weather, really bad down there. Mud slides and all that and rain, and everything. So I didn't go. And that's when they got the film."

Something was out of kilter. *"And I had already told—"* Merritt had said. I sensed that Patterson's early morning visit, with Gimlin's horse rig, wasn't the first time that Patterson had pressured Merritt to get involved. And what about Merritt's statement about the mud and rain? I knew from the Bigfoot books that the weather was fine when Patterson and Gimlin went down in mid-October of 1967.

Merritt was jumping from topic to topic. Each topic held a clue regarding Patterson's actions and the Bigfoot footage. I dropped the issue of the exact time when Merritt and Patterson drove to Hollywood to copyright "Bigfoot."

Merritt began talking about the tower Patterson wanted to put in a tree on Merritt's property.

"Tracks had been found around our area there," said Merritt, "and Roger thought there was a Bigfoot there. I mean, we're talkin' about right *there* where we lived."

"Where you *lived?"*

"Now, I thought maybe they'd been planted, see. But I didn't want to get into this too deep because I'm a Jehovah's Witness, and people think I'm makin' up some demonistic story or somethin'. You know. . . ." He stared into space. "I know a lot of things I've done. I just don't want to bring it up."

His eyes shifted away.

"But Roger Patterson died in 1972," I said. "We're talking about *twenty-six years ago*."

"I know when he died," he said petulantly. "But I mean, this Bigfoot thing, there's more to it than you'll ever hear. I mean, I'm goin' to tell you right now there's things that happened. There's very few people know about. And it's just strange, just strange."

I felt Merritt was hiding something, but I didn't push him. "When you say things that happened," I said calmly, without inflection, "you mean strange occurrences, or sightings of Bigfoot?"

"Sightings and stuff, yeah. I just never did—" He broke off. "I wanted to keep it away from my town 'cause I thought people would think it was fake, that it was me makin' this stuff up to try to draw people into the town. You see what I'm sayin'?"

"Right."

"See, I had enough pride in me. It was a western town. I didn't want some gimmick or carnival-type thing, you know." He took a breath. "See, Roger was obsessed with Bigfoot. That's all he talked about. He'd call me up all the time. I mean, he had other little things he did. Roger liked to sing and record and stuff. Roger Patterson was one of the most talented people I ever run into in my entire life. He could do anything. He could sing, and he wrote, and he'd just do anything. He had such drive. I've never been around no one like him in my whole career in show business. Nothin' like Roger."

"What do you think motivated him?"

Merritt crossed his short legs and leaned back. "He was small, but he fought for everything he got. He was built like a bull." Merritt rattled off the same descriptions I had heard over and over. Tough. Lifted weights. Rode bulls.

"Did he go from project to project?" I asked innocently.

"No, he'd work on three or four at once. But when he got onto Bigfoot, he locked in on that."

"But I can't get a good sense of him ever having one job."

"Roger didn't work at *nothin'*," he said bluntly. "Roger liked to just do what he wanted to do. He didn't work for nobody."

"Well, how did he survive?"

"Well, I don't know. Oh, he'd make things to sell and stuff. Now, his brother Glenn, and all them worked, but. . . . The day he did come up with that one, I thought he had totally flipped out of his mind, you know."

"The film?"

"Not just the film. It was the idea of that book even. We started makin' that documentary film before he ever shot that [Bigfoot] film. That's why I thought it was phony. KIMA TV, the biggest station in Yakima, let us borrow a sixteen-millimeter camera. I forget how many of us guys would ride. I rode a horse down a bluff in the movie. And I did a whole lot of different things."

"Who else was in that documentary?"

"Bob Gimlin. He was supposed to be an Apache tracker. And Stewart Clark, an old cowboy. And then the two brothers. Can't remember names. Lived down in Ahtanum."

"Heironimus?"

Merritt shot me a sharp look. "How'd you know that?"

"Well, Les Johnson mentioned them."

"Well, Bob and his brother Bill Heironimus. They had the pack horses they was leadin'. And they rode all the time, some of them team roped. Let's see, who else rode? Richard Bailey played the prospector. He rode on a donkey. Curt Hayes. He died not too long ago. His son's a Jehovah's Witness, a friend of mine. Curt had these blue-tick bear hounds in the movie, too."

"Bear hounds?"

"Hounds, like they were trackin' Bigfoot. And they did run into a bear up there. They treed one up there way back in the South Fork where we seen wild horses."

"So, who was the camera man?" I asked.

"A guy named Fred Smith from KIMA. He shot everything from a horse, most of it."

"Who directed the scenes?"

"Roger. Roger was *somethin' else!*" His eyes lit up.

Merritt said that Roger had half-quarter horses and half-POAs. A POA is a Pony of the Americas, a small horse bred in 1954 for riders who were too big for a small pony but not big enough for a full-sized horse. Merritt rode a POA, too. Roger shot the documentary over a three-day period, Merritt told me. "We had campfire scenes. I was playin' the harmonica. A lot of it they knocked out of the film. We'd all sit around the campfire, our horses tied up on a rope line."

"Roger was the driving force behind the idea of this Bigfoot documentary?"

"When Roger got onto something, you might as well figure it's gonna be done!"

"What was he going to do with this movie once it was done?"

"He was going to sell it to a big company."

"To, like, a Hollywood company?"

He didn't answer me, but said, "And what they did, once he got that other film clip, which I think was real. . . . I knew Roger on his death bed. Roger said it was real. So I—"

"Did you hear him say that?"

"Other people did."

"Who?"

Merritt twitched. He wasn't enjoying my line of questioning. "Well, I don't know. I wasn't there when he died."

I said, "Well, he let everyone know from the beginning, you and Bob Gimlin and others, that he wanted to make a Bigfoot documentary and then sell it."

"Yeah," Merritt admitted, "he had so much faith in it."

"And to sell it to a Hollywood company."

"Yeah," Merritt said. "We ran out of money. We had $700. Well, Roger and I went down to Hollywood to try to get money. We went to Newty Cohen. Newty made these sequin suits for all these big country western stars. He was a Jewish guy. He had this old store. I'll never forget the place, 'cause he had all these ol' sewing machines goin', these women sewing these suits, and that ol' wood floor, like a warehouse floor. He had these suits that may cost $10,000 a piece, some of 'em, you know the big movie stars, cowboy guys, you know, Tex Ritter and all of 'em. And out back in the lot, he wanted to show us these cars. He had two cars, had guns on 'em, steer horns, and all that stuff, you know. And so we went over there and tried to get him to join, but he wouldn't invest a dime. He didn't want to mess with it. We tried to get $5,000. Roger took out a briefcase of stuff to convince Newty."

"How long did it take this Newty to say no?"

"About thirty minutes." He laughed.

"Then who funded Roger's documentary?"

"We just dug up a dollar here and a dollar there, whatever Roger could scrape up."

Patterson's book was published in 1966, and Merritt had bought his five-acre farm the same year. Merritt had refused to join Patterson and Gimlin on their October 1967 trip to Bluff Creek because, Merritt had said, "I went to Hollywood with him." It was reasonable, therefore, that Merritt and Patterson went to see Newty *before* October 20, 1967.

I asked, "Did you and Patterson take a film canister with you to L.A.?"

"I think we just went down there to talk 'em into doin' it."

"You were asking for financing to finish the movie?"

"Yeah. To finish it. So finally Roger got in touch with the BBC. They said they'd do it."

I remembered reading a clipping that stated that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had made a documentary on Bigfoot in 1968, which featured Patterson's Bluff Creek footage. The BBC must have taken that footage *and* Patterson's documentary footage and edited them together with BBC footage. What a tangled web we weave. . . .

Merritt said, "Roger and his brother-in-law Al DeAtley made a lot of money with that film. They took that film, and they broke all records at the Salt Palace in Utah. They hit big places and stuff to set that up, and they'd draw big crowds in. They was runnin' extensive advertisement on television and everything."

Pat took the cassette from me and handed me another one. Merritt was shifting uncomfortably in his chair, the interview grinding on. He said that Pat Mason, his publicity agent, was part of the Patterson-DeAtley film. Merritt wanted to get involved, too, but. . . . His voice was resentful. "Once Al DeAtley took over, he took over for Roger, too. He just took the whole thing over. He owned a big cement company."

"So what did he take over, exactly?" I asked.

"The whole promotion. The whole thing. He did the whole thing." His eyes were angry.

The name of the film Patterson and DeAtley marketed was simply titled *Bigfoot*, said Merritt. The film opened with Al DeAtley who "started off talkin'," and then "the BBC guys talked. Then it showed Dr. Leakey and Grover Krantz . . . a lot of different scientists. Some of them were against it, some of them were for it. Some of them believed. Some of them didn't believe it."

Merritt remembered that about this time Patterson had a Hollywood actor, Lee Lilly (aka Ross Hagen), narrate and record a song Patterson had written called "The Legend of Bigfoot."

"With that Hollywood voice, I mean Hagen has the roughest soundin' voice I've ever heard. He does all the movie things that's comin' out. You've heard him a thousand times."

It was time to home in on Merritt's involvement with Patterson. I prodded him back to Patterson's early morning visit to Merritt's house. "Now, why didn't you want to go down to Bluff Creek with him?"

"Because I was workin' with 'im all the time. It was like 4:00 in the mornin'. He'd already asked me." And Merritt repeated his story about his concern with the mud slides. "'I'm not goin' down there.' Roger was all excited and called me as soon as he got back. And I thought he was fakin' it, you know."

"Do you remember what he said to you?"

"No, he was talkin' so fast, and I couldn't remember."

Merritt remained friends with Patterson after October 20. "But what happened is other people started movin' in and wantin' a piece of the pie. And they had more power and money, and he needed money. So the more they moved in, the more I got cut out of it."

And of course the man who moved in was Al DeAtley.

"I totally got cut out," Merritt glared.

Then, he softened as he drifted with his memories. One time he picked grapes with Patterson, and Patterson made juice from the grapes to treat his cancer. Another time, Merritt and Buddy Knox, a famous rockabilly star who recorded "Party Doll," traveled with Merritt, Patterson, and Gimlin in Patterson's van out into the hills.

I asked Merritt about Prentis Beck. Prentis had no hand in writing the song "Buffalo Grass," Merritt quickly replied, but Beck did help Merritt out with money.

Money. Money was the river that ran through the Patterson story in the late 1960s in the Ahtanum Valley. So many friends investing in each other, writing songs, making movies, loaning money, giving money. Money for survival. Money to produce entertainment. Money to make bigger money. To become rich.

I ended the interview with the subject I had opened the interview with—Merritt's western town. "When did you close down the town?"

Merritt said that for five years he ran the town along with his own in-house recording studio. About two years after Patterson's death, he closed the town when the 1973 recession (caused by the oil embargo) struck. The recession also dried up his recording business. Merritt was working fourteen hours a day to just barely survive. The stress was too much. Finally, he had a heart attack.

Since then Merritt had suffered two open heart surgeries, he said. "I just got out of the hospital with a really bad one." He stood up and lifted his shirt. A fresh, red scar ran from the area of his heart to his waist. "They ripped me," he said. "I couldn't walk. Now I can walk and run just like a little kid. So I'm really happy, you know."

Merritt pulled out some photos to show Pat and me. One photo showed one of Patterson's POAs that Merritt rode. Another showed Yakama Indian teepees set up at the edge of the western town. "Here's a shot of the street. There was a school house here, buildings here, sagebrush all here. I shot that through a wagon wheel. There was a saloon down here. We had two barns."

He slipped the photos back into their folder. Merritt escorted us into his living room where he decided to use the remaining minutes to preach to us. "I'm a full-time minister," he said with enthusiasm. "I'm out every day. And I still record and play, 'cause see, the Jehovah Witnesses aren't fanatical. We drink wine. Jesus drank wine every day. He didn't drink grape juice, they didn't have refrigerators."

Merritt opened a carrying case and pulled out pamphlets. He handed them to me. "Until I became a Jehovah's Witness, my life was . . . like I didn't like know where I was goin'." Once Merritt became a Witness, he and his second wife quit drinking, both on the same day. Merritt rocked on his heels excitedly. "It's been about twenty-three years ago we quit smokin'." His wife smiled at him from the kitchen. "We got baptized the same day," Merritt added.

With only a little time left, I tried to redirect him. "Was Roger Patterson a religious man?"

"He wanted the truth and didn't know where to find it. Now he's goin' to get it, because he will be resurrected. As far as being a churchgoer, Roger wasn't. He wasn't an atheist or nothing like that. He had a lot of really good attributes, Roger did, as far as life."

"He wasn't a mean person?"

"No, no, no, no. Roger was a nice guy. He was real humble. At the same time he had a lot of power. Really a lot of power."

Roger could beat people up, I remembered.

"By power you mean—"

"He had an inner being, like a lot of drive, and when he got on a project, he did the project. He wasn't afraid to tackle anything. That's what I meant."

"Was part of his power attracting people to his ideas?"

"Yeah, yeah. He tried to. Sometimes he didn't. But he did have a way of makin' people want to work with him."

"It sounds like he was an artist."

Merritt's eyes lit up. "He was an artist, yeah!"

I had struck a resonant cord. "You hit it right on!" Merritt said.

He looked up at me, grinning. "You're probably one of the first people I've ever heard say that. Except people that knew him personally. But, Roger was an artist. He was a genius. The man, he built things all the time. He used to build everything."

"What would he build?"

"Things out of mowers and rigs. And just saddles, make his own saddles."

"Oh, really?"

"Anything. Anything Roger wanted, he'd make."

Even, I thought to myself, a Bigfoot suit?

Merritt said that Roger's death affected him a lot. But he didn't go to his funeral. I found that odd. They seemed to have been such great friends.

Merritt had run out of steam, and so had Pat and I. We shook Merritt's hand, thanked him for the interview, and picked up some tacos and burritos at a Taco Bell in Washougal.

Out on Interstate 5, rushing for home, while I balanced a taco near my mouth and tried to drive with one hand through a horrendous rainstorm, Pat and I recapped what we had heard.

I turned toward her. "Merritt revealed a direct connection between Patterson and Hollywood. He seemed to be implying that it occurred *before* the footage of October 20, 1967."

"For certain, Merritt expected to make money off of Patterson's movie ideas," Pat said.

I nodded. "With Patterson, money and Bigfoot went hand in hand. But, you know, Merritt sometimes seemed evasive. He often skipped from topic to topic."

"Yes," Pat said. She tilted her head and took a bite of her taco. "Like, the look-out tower Patterson put in a tree on Merritt's property. What was that all about?"

"Did you notice that Merritt knew of Heironimus?" I said. I grabbed a napkin off the dash and wiped my mouth. "And he knew all about Al DeAtley. His own publicity agent, Pat Mason, was also involved."

As we rushed toward home, sheets of water slapping the windshield, it was clear to me: Jerry Lee Merritt knew a hell of a lot about Roger Patterson and his motives. But I had only skimmed the surface. I needed more. And I absolutely wanted to confirm the Hollywood connection. I wanted the tightest timeline I could establish if it emerged that Patterson had planned a hoax from the beginning, with Hollywood playing a role.

For a moment I took my eyes away from the dark, flooded pavement glinting under the headlights and glanced at Pat. "We need to interview Merritt again," I said.

"Absolutely," she said and smiled.

* * *

When I called Merritt several weeks later, I informed him that I had transcribed the tape recordings and found that I needed to wrap up some details. He said he was too busy, that he had to attend to church matters; besides, he said the weather was bad, and it looked like snow, and would be a dangerous time for me to drive. I waited a week, then sent him an e-mail. Receiving no response, I called him. I said that things needed clarifying. He was sour and withdrawn. In fact, he projected a sense of dread, as if knowing he had to go to the dentist. Finally, he relented. Several days later, Pat and I sat down with him in his tiny studio.

A veil of mistrust clouded his eyes. I sensed he knew I was here to probe deeper into facts that he would prefer to keep hidden. To warm him to the subject, I handed him a photo that I had taken of the last remaining building standing on Mike Fairchild's property. He couldn't remember the name of the building. Then, I carefully handed him the photo of the six men on horseback that Larry Lund had given me. Merritt pointed to the cowboys, from left to right. "That's Roger, and that's John Ballard. He sang on one of my records." He tried to remember. "'Buffalo Grass,' that's it. This is me here. And that's Howard Heironimus. And this is Bob Gimlin. He's dressed like an Indian. And that's Bob Heironimus."

He peered closely at the photo. "We were at a campfire when that was shot. We was gettin' ready to go back out on horses up in the mountains."

Merritt joined Patterson and the other "actors" and rode about six miles off of the South Fork, up onto the Yakama Indian Reservation. "We were way up out of the sage brush into the timber."

Merritt remembered one scene in the documentary of him riding precariously down a steep embankment on Ahtanum Ridge. "That horse I was ridin' was one that Bob Gimlin was breakin'. It hadn't been rode very much."

Patterson shot the documentary in three days, with the men riding their horses back to Tampico each day before nightfall. On one of those days, Patterson took shots of the men at a wild horse corral built by the Yakamas up in the mountains. When Merritt recalled Patterson shooting the campfire scene—Merritt playing a harmonica, all of their horses tied to a rope line—he laughed. "Roger threw kerosene on the fire to make it blaze up. He was always doing stuff like that."

Staging things, I thought.

"He was depicting a safari-type thing to look for Bigfoot. We were just doin' things to make it look like we were doing it."

"Did he ever try to depict Bigfoot in the movie?"

"No, no," he said quickly. "Not once. Not once."

"What happened to all the footage that Roger took?"

"Well, he—I don't know. I don't know anything about that. Uh, all I know. . . ." Then he leaned toward me, his leg bouncing. The expression on his face revealed that he had thought long and hard on something difficult, had weighed the consequences of the telling. He looked me in the eyes.

"I'll tell you some things about Roger that nobody knows—you'll know it, and nobody else knows it, maybe my family knows—that will knock you out. I hate to tell you this because being a Jehovah's Witness, I don't want people to think I'm some kind of nut. Some people already think Jehovah's Witnesses are nuts."

"I respect your belief in your religion."

He corrected me: "It's a *way of life*. We don't even call it a religion."

His face turned somber. "What I'm about to tell you the documentaries don't even know about. I'll start this, and this is gonna be tough because I don't really want to do it. But I'll do it, because without it you won't really know the true story. You just got a depiction of things that happened, and everything you've heard is true about what Roger did. Roger was a person that would argue with you until he would fall over if he thought there was a lie involved. I *do* know that for a fact. Now, I mean, I've known him all my life and he did not—Roger wanted to know the truth. He wanted to know. I wish he was here now. I could minister to him. But he wanted to know what made things tick. He was an inventor; he's always doing things, always inventin' different things."

I slipped the tape recorder closer to him. I could sense Pat's spine stiffen. My heart was beating hard. Was this the truth that Merritt was dancing around? Was this a confession?

"He was always inventin' different things," Merritt said, "and when this thing got goin', well, my place is where it was at, because Roger didn't have a telephone then and there was nobody else that would mess with him. I mean they thought it was the dingiest thing they had ever heard of until the money started comin'. That's when Al DeAtley stepped in.

"Anyway, Roger was always comin' down to the house because he liked us and knew us all. And then he wanted to know if he could make some calls. I had a little office in the basement. So we started calling people, this and that. I think he had already called *Argosy* before he came to the house. At a later date, Roger got this big UPS truck. See, no one's ever heard of this. . . . A big ol' UPS truck, one of them big ones, not a little one. And he painted it a red-lookin' primer, you know. He built a thing for the horses in the back of the truck. He already had a thing built in the Volkswagen bus for two horses." Merritt, was off and running, like a wild stallion.

"He built, like, a lab in the back of the truck, and he had a communications center. He had bunks, and there were things. The first time he came by," Merritt started laughing, "and slid those doors open one afternoon, I'll never forget that! He hopped out, and he was just goin' *crazy*, 'cause this thing had a rack on top where he could get up and watch at night, like on a safari. It looked like a fort comin' down the road, you know. Well, then, he built something else. Because here's what happened."

He lowered his voice. I strained every muscle, and thought, This tape recorder had better be working.

"One night my ex-wife wife went down to the restroom. She looked out the window and seen a Bigfoot come right up to her!" Merritt looked straight into my eyes. Clearly, he was deadly serious. "So she starts screamin'. She said it looked in at her and had red eyes. Well, I thought, maybe she imagined it. She couldn't even talk when she come up the stairs, she was so white. So she did see somethin'? No doubt. Well, Roger heard about it, and that done it. He had this giant bird cage built to put in the top of one them cottonwood trees."

Merritt trembled slightly, and his chair squealed. "He had a guy in Wiley City named Charles Davis. He was a welder and a mechanic. He had an old farm shop, tractors and stuff, and Davis built a giant bird cage for Roger. We were just building the ghost town. Well, this bird cage would hold, like, four or five people. It had benches around it. It had a little place for binoculars to fit. Roger did everything right! I mean, he didn't do nothin' half way. He just had to go all the way with it. Well, this thing looked just like a big, giant birdcage. It was almost as big as this room." Merritt's room was about ten by ten feet.

Patterson then hauled the huge contraption onto Merritt's property.

"You let Roger—" I began. "I mean this is your property—to put a big cage in one of your trees?"

"I didn't want him to put it up there."

One day Merritt and his family came home, and there, near the cottonwood tree, sat Patterson's red-primer van, and near it, Prentis Beck's Datsun truck. Patterson had tied a big, thick cable to his truck and to Beck's truck. Hooked to Beck's truck was another cable that Patterson had slung around a precariously small tree limb near the top of the tree. With Beck balancing the birdcage, Patterson hefted the birdcage up with the cable and a pulley. "That thing must have weighed at least one thousand pounds, and I don't know how the tree ever held it."

It was a sight to see: Beck, a pipe in his mouth, with Patterson, the little muscular cowboy, lifting the enormous monstrosity into the sky. Merritt was shocked. Patterson had barged right onto his property, "And here he was pulling that thing up. I said, 'Look at that! What's he doin'! You know, what's goin' on!' And there it was. It just made me sick at my stomach when I seen it goin' up 'cause I thought, 'Oh no, *this thing ain't gonna cut it!*'" He argued with Patterson, but it did no good.

"Yeah, and so one night Roger was up in the bird cage, made like a big lookout tower. And one night when he was gone, that thing broke loose and came down and hit the ground and that metal, those big, ol' steel bars. . . . If we'd been in it, we'd been killed. I mean, it came down like forty feet maybe. It was way up there. He made ladders all the way up, all around."

"Wow!" I cried out with a laugh.

Then, said Merritt, Patterson hung up a big speaker bought from a secondhand store.

"It was like—you're tapin' this, right?" Merritt asked, his leg bouncing like a cork on a stormy wave.

"Absolutely!"

The speaker was twenty-three inches across. "It was from a big, ol' time radio or somethin'. Roger went way up in the top of one of them cottonwood trees and made steps going up there. Our daughter like to got killed on those steps. He went up there and tied that in and run a line into our little studio—a control room—and tied in this Bigfoot sound he had duplicated. Have you ever heard the sound?"

"No." I was mesmerized by Merritt's newest tale.

"Well, he uses it in the film. He went up to this ol' time church in Yakima, Catholic church or somethin', and asked them if he could climb up in there and make this tape. He went up in the tower and put a bucket over his head and *screamed!* So he made this tape and slowed it down real slow like a call, like a Bigfoot call. Roger'd do anything. Have you ever heard that Bigfoot call they do?"

In my collection was a tape of an alleged Bigfoot cry. "It's like a siren," I said. "It goes really low and then high."

"No, Roger does the one. It *does* sound scary. He brought it to us to listen to. Well, we rigged it up and put it on that big speaker, and at night he'd turn that thing on. It's a wonder the neighbors hadn't run us out of the country. And they'd make fun of us. Ah, it was terrible."

"So Patterson would pump the audio track through the speaker in the lookout tower to call Bigfoot in at night?" I said.

"Yeah, he'd get up in his tower and look for him. He was serious. I mean, maybe the man was nuts, but he was serious, you know."

"Did Roger put the lookout tower in the tree to get the attention of the people in the area?" I asked.

"I don't think he even wanted 'em to know it."

"With a speaker blaring at night—"

"Well, he didn't care about the neighbors. He aimed it at the mountains, up a canyon, where the sagebrush comes along. He didn't care. He was tryin' to draw Bigfoot in. Now that's what he wanted."

Merritt speculated that the birdcage incident happened *after* October 20, 1967.

Prentis Beck, one of Patterson's loyal followers, had helped Patterson lift the lookout structure. I asked Merritt to tell me about Beck.

"He was an old cowboy guy," Merritt recalled. "He'd come over to visit and talk about rodeo and cattle stuff. He was over to my place a lot even when Roger wasn't there. Prentis came down one time smokin' a pipe." Merritt chuckled. "You'd have to meet this guy to believe him. He followed Roger around a lot, but you know he was always poppin' off 'bout Roger. He was always sayin', 'You can't pipe enough money to Roger.' You couldn't get enough money to Roger because he'd buy everything. Anyway, Roger came in there. It was a hot, summer day. It was pretty cool in the basement. He came in, and I heard this noise, and Roger was carrying this big chain with locks on it. It was a new chain. I said, 'What are you doin' with this chain, Roger?' So he set it down, and he said, 'I'll show you.' So Roger took Prentis," Merritt started laughing uncontrollably, "and he chained Prentis up with that thing on the floor, and Prentis had that pipe still in his mouth. And Roger was going, 'OK, we'll chain him up,' talkin' about how he was gonna chain Bigfoot. And I says, 'Roger, are you serious about—' Here was Prentis down like this on the floor, laying like this sayin', 'When are we gonna get this over with?' I said, 'Let him go, Roger!' There was always somethin' like that, I mean, it was like, my whole life's been a comedy show."

I laughed generously along with Merritt, but secretly I was shocked. I had an unsettling feeling that Patterson hadn't been playing a game with Prentis. He was abusing him, controlling him.

"Well, it went on and on," Merritt yawned, "and different things happened, you know, little things and so. . . ."

"What were those little things?"

"Well, here's one of 'em." He uncrossed his legs and hunched forward, peering at me in suspicion. "I'll tell you about it, and I hope the Jehovah's brothers and sisters don't hear this."

He swallowed. "Here's what happened. One night, we went to the movie, me and my wife and the two boys." Arriving home, Merritt drove down the sloping driveway. "Just as we swung in to come back in front, we seen something jump a big stump down there, like a Bigfoot down by the creek. And we didn't really think a whole lot about it because . . . I don't know, we just never did."

"Was it before Roger's footage?"

"Yeah. It could be before that. I couldn't say, but I'll tell you what happened later."

I prayed, Tape, don't break.

"One night in the summer I had the window open in the bedroom. The bedroom was facin' out towards the ghost town. We had no street lights, but I had a 300-watt bulb on my front porch. I was layin' in bed about 2:00 in the morning. I was sleepin', and all of a sudden, something woke me up. I have never in my entire life heard anything like it! It was so loud! And it was screaming like a man. It was hurt, like a wild cave man. He was going, *'AHHHHHHHHH!'* It was loud, only it was different. I don't know, it wasn't a human sound, no way. And so I said, 'What's goin' on?' I thought it was over in the field. I got up. I run to the door. My dog, I heard him barking really loud, just yappin' and gettin' with it. He was a smart dog, and he was a Scottish border shepherd, a pure bred."

Merritt held his hand a few feet above the floor. "He was about this tall. They have white-tipped tails."

Mentally, I urged Merritt on.

"Well, I opened the door and kicked on the porch light, and I've never in my entire life seen anything like it! The dust was just flyin' on the driveway. You couldn't hardly see. I looked, and the dog had this thing—this thing's rump was like this wide." Merritt measured about three feet in the air with his hands. "And I thought, it's a bear, you know, but it wasn't. It wasn't a bear. It was just screamin' like a wild man. And he was reachin' down. What happened—that dog had him by his private parts! I hate to say that, but that's what happened. And so I hollered, 'Turn him loose, Tip!' And the dog turned him loose and headed back to the house, and that dog stunk so bad. I mean it was like terrible. He ran in the house. We couldn't get the dog out of the house. It was really a clean dog, you know, and that thing smelt so bad, and it was going, *'AHHHHHHHHHH!'* And then it turned and went right up on the road. It wasn't fifteen feet from the road, not even that far probably. . . . Went out on the road there; and it headed down the road just like this." Merritt drummed his hands rapidly on the table next to him, simulating footsteps. "He had a padded sound. But you could hear it loud going down the road, just like a man runnin' barefoot down the road. And so I didn't tell anybody, you know. My wife, she knew about it, and the boys. We went out in the driveway the next day, and there was all of these tracks. All over the driveway. Now I mean nobody—I was there when it happened, I seen it. These tracks were maybe fifteen to sixteen inches, but they weren't like this, they were like this, and they were about this wide."

This event upset Merritt terribly. He worried that if Bigfoot started visiting his western town and Patterson got involved, it would ruin his new enterprise. "They'll think we made this up to try to get publicity. That's why I tried to get Roger away from there. 'Cause I thought people would say he's using this for a gimmick to try to make that town famous."

"I see."

"Do you understand where I'm comin' from now? 'Cause we had really worked hard. I told Larry, one of my boys, to sweep the tracks away. Anyway, Larry went out there and took some apple boxes, and he covered over two or three of those tracks—this is like two days later—and he went and called Roger up. *Ah, ma-a-n!* Here come Roger in that Volkswagen bus! He hit the brakes and jumped out, and he starts cussin' me and everything. He was so mad. Roger said, 'How come you did this, kept the tracks hidden from me?' I said to Roger, 'The reason I didn't call you I ain't made *no money* off of this. And not only that, I'm just tard of messin' with it. I just don't want no more of this, Roger.' Roger got really got mad at me, he really did, because we had always been good friends. He went and grabbed this plaster cast thing and stirred all this stuff, and he got two or three tracks. They were good, I mean they were the real thing. I know it hadn't been faked 'cause I actually seen the thing do it! I told him, 'You don't understand what this does to us, man!' We got over it. You know, we were friends for too many years to not get over it."

Merritt begged and begged, and finally Patterson agreed to keep secret where he got the tracks.

I started, "If Patterson could have faked—"

"There ain't *nobody* that could have faked that," Merritt interrupted. "The way the dog was screamin' and bitin', and when that thing raised up, there was hair hangin' off it. And them big feet goin' down that pavement, I'll never forget that sound on a clear summer night. The dust was just foggin' everywhere. I mean, it couldn't have been faked. It could have been shot. I had a .44 magnum. I'd shoot at anything that moved back then. No," he insisted.

Now, the thing that peered into the window and frightened his wife, that could have been faked. And the time his boys found tracks near the garden on the east side of the house near some garbage. . . . "They come runnin' in the house yelling, 'We found some tracks!' They were gigantic, wide tracks. We checked them and called Roger up. He came down, all excited. But there was one thing we found about them tracks. We never seen two tracks. Only the right one. That's why I thought it was fake. . . ."

Merritt remembered one of his sons finding hair. "Roger and Bob Gimlin showed up. A gob of hair was in the crotch of a bush and stuff."

"But the prints from the right foot of the Bigfoot, you felt they were faked?" I asked.

"Yeah, I had a feelin' they were faked."

"Who would have done that?"

"Well, I thought maybe Roger tried to get us, to try to get me more involved in. . . ." Merritt's voice trailed off.

Fire in his blood, Patterson insisted that a Bigfoot was passing through Merritt's property because nearby was a little swampy area, and the Bigfoot might have been born there, and every fall he was foraging in the orchards for apples.

"I wasn't involved in Bigfoot, not that much," Merritt said with a troubled expression. "When I did get involved in it, it didn't do me any good, if you know what I mean. It was like, what's the use?"

I pressed him about Patterson's interest in the western town. "Roger was not part of the ghost town?" I asked. "Never built a thing?"

"Nothin'. Didn't have no interest in it. Was too busy with Bigfoot. The studio thing, cuttin' records, he liked that idea, but that was as far as it went. If it had been up to Roger, he'd have got rid of that town."

People in the Ahtanum Valley suspected Patterson was carrying on his activities in the cottonwood tree to promote Bigfoot. Others thought that Patterson's lookout tower was a method to promote Merritt's town.

"Roger figured he almost owned my property because he had found his pot of gold. He found a place to expand, and to also use what he had seen there [the Bigfoot tracks]. That's the way I picture it. Maybe I'm wrong. But we never planned nothin' together saying, 'Let's make this famous, and use that.' Not one time. Not even once."

Patterson remained a competitor. "He didn't want the ghost town there. He'd say, 'Tear this thing down, and get it out of here!' 'Cause it was like he thought what he had was so much bigger than anything I was doin' at the time. Mine was like a toy that was in the way. The shack buildings over there didn't mean nothin' to him. It was what he was doin' that was important."

He paused, fuming, then he said solemnly, "Roger wrote a song about his self that was played at his funeral. It was called 'Run For Your Life.' About him dyin' with Hodgkin's disease. When I was in L.A., he was already writin' it. It was a pretty well-written song. I can't remember exactly, but it went something like, 'I stepped out on the street, my knees a little shaky, for what the doctor said hit me hard. He said you've got a year, maybe two to do your livin', run for your life.'" Merritt recorded the song with Patterson singing it and Merritt playing the music.

I inserted the subject of Bob Heironimus into Merritt's story. "People, independent of each other, have told me that during this time period, a guy was wearing some kind of suit."

"OK, I've heard the same story."

"And his name is Bob Heironimus," I said.

"Well, see, that's—they—" Merritt stuttered. "That's—they—they made it up, I think, because I didn't know anything about it. I didn't—I don't know whoever got it started even. A lot of people didn't like Roger. They didn't like what he was doin' because it wasn't in line, you know. You go out and do something like that. What are you goin' to get? Criticism. And it's goin' to be the biggest thing you get. I think what Roger seen was real. And I'll never believe anything different, and they said when he was dyin' he still said it was real. Now why would a man dyin' still say it was real?"

"Well. . . ."

"You know what I'm sayin'? Why would he do that?" Merritt's color rose.

"No, I understand that. But people have voluntarily mentioned that—"

"Well, Bob Heironimus might have got drunk in the tavern." Merritt crossed his arms. "He hung around the taverns all the time, just jokin' and stuff, and I don't know why Bob would have said that because that would have made a fool out of his self. I figured it out. It gives him a little leverage, it gives him a little . . . people playing with his mind. What I'm saying, it gives him like sayin', 'Oh yeah, they kinda want to know what I know, and I won't tell them, and I'm in control.' I think that's—I've heard this before. Yeah, I've heard it before," he grunted.

"But why would everyone say Bob Heironimus?" A thought entered my mind: Heironimus was the tallest of the six men sitting on horseback in the group photo.

"Because—OK, why would everyone say that?" He glowered. "If you sit around a tavern and you tell two or three guys one week, and they go to the tavern and they tell this little knit family down there in Wiley and Tampico and all that, and word gets out and, 'Hey, you remember ol' Bob.' You know, pretty soon it just. . . ." Merritt glowered. "I've heard this before."

I had been thinking about Bob Heironimus for some time. Heironimus had known Patterson; he had played a role in his documentary. Other people in the Ahtanum Valley said Heironimus played Bigfoot in Patterson's Bluff Creek film, although I knew they were mistaken that the famous footage was shot near the South Fork. I decided to spring a hard question on Merritt: "I'm wondering if the Bigfoot you saw on your property was Bob Heironimus in a suit?"

"No. In the first place Bob would know better to come on my property in somethin' like that, 'cause I almost killed some guys with a .44 magnum one night. And I'm a dead shot. I was, like, a sniper in the Army. I don't miss, you know, unless I want to. And they had the word out, 'Don't mess with Jerry Merritt.' Because, I mean, the word was out up there. No, I don't think Bob Heironimus would have got on my property. I can't believe he'd even think about it."

"So you don't think Roger was trying to convince people in the community that Bigfoot existed?"

Uncrossing his leg, Merritt crossed the other, leaned back, and folded his arms. "I want to be honest with ya. At first I said, 'What's he tryin' to pull?' And I really got frustrated with him, you know." But then Patterson traveled to Bluff Creek and shot the footage. "I concluded, 'That's a joke, too, a set-up deal.' For a long time. . . . I think in the back of all of our minds, unless you see Bigfoot in a cage, you know what I mean. . . . But when Roger died, he was still sayin' it was real. Now what benefit, if any at all, would it have made the man to say somethin' was real if he didn't know it was real?"

Merritt believed that a dying man wouldn't lie. But, I thought, did Patterson actually *say* the film was real on his death bed? Where was Merritt's proof of Patterson's honesty?

I suggested that Patterson could have declared the footage real to benefit his family. He would leave the film to his family upon his death.

"Well, that part, yeah, you're right there," Merritt admitted. "But it didn't benefit his family, because the way it is, I don't think Patty's ever made hardly nothing off this thing. She's still working minimal jobs. There was big money made, but they didn't get it. I'll tell you that for a fact."

Actually, the film had been used in documentaries for decades. Patty Patterson must have made many tens of thousands of dollars, at least.

I directed Merritt to the Hollywood connection. I wanted, finally, the exact time Merritt and Patterson traveled to Hollywood in relation to October 20, 1967.

Merritt reflected for a while. He looked up at me. "Roger and I went to Hollywood *before* that film. He knew I knew a few people in Hollywood." Merritt repeated his story of how Walter Hurst, his contract lawyer, copyrighted the name "Bigfoot" for Patterson. "Hmm," he mused. "We went down to Hollywood from my house. I lived in Hollywood in '66, and I moved from Hollywood in the fall or summer of '66 back to Yakima, so it would have been '67."

After Merritt set up the Bigfoot copyright with Hurst, Patterson and someone else went back down to Hollywood to finalize the papers.

"And so the purpose of your and Roger's trip was to copyright the title of the movie?"

"Yeah, the movie, and also the book, and whatever he needed to copyright the title."

I knew that Patterson had actually copyrighted his Bigfoot book in 1966. But I got Merritt's point. Patterson wanted to copyright the name "Bigfoot" for *anything else* he might conceivably produce.

"It was open game, you know," Merritt said. "So he did it. And we came back to Yakima."

"When you went down to Hollywood, you drove down together?"

"Yeah, we took that Volkswagen rig of his, his old Volkswagen, and I like to starved to death. We didn't have any money, and Roger was on a health kick, and he took a big ol' package of sunflower seeds. It was like eating bird food. I said, 'Man!' He said, 'You don't need this meat, it'll kill you.' I wanted a hamburger, something good. He stayed with Ross Hagen. Ross produced one of my records. I stayed with Gene Vincent. We stayed in Hollywood four days."

Merritt recollected that sometime after the Bluff Creek footage was shot—possibly in 1968—Patterson went back to Hollywood with Pat Mason, Merritt's former agent in the Gene Vincent years, to cut the record "Bigfoot is a Legend."

"Pat Mason put the money up for it," Merritt said.

Hagen narrated the song. The song was recorded at Original Sound Studio on Sunset Boulevard where Merritt had once recorded.

"The song was about Bigfoot bein' a good guy," Merritt remembered. "I can't remember the exact words. At the end, Bigfoot reaches down and saves a guy's life on a cliff."

Spontaneously, Merritt brought up the New York cocktail party that he had mentioned in passing in the first interview—the party designed to promote Patterson's Bigfoot footage. As best Merritt could recollect, the party occurred in 1968. Patty Patterson, Bob Gimlin's wife, and two or three other women walked into The Corral in Yakima. After finishing his set, Merritt joined the women at their table for drinks.

"I said, 'Where's Roger at? How's he doin'?' Patty said, 'He's in New York.' And I said, 'New York! Like, New York City?! What's he *doin'* there!'"

Merritt learned that Patterson, DeAtley, Gimlin, and Mason had flown to New York to host a big publicity affair to kick off the film. And it was Merritt himself who had helped Patterson copyright "Bigfoot." Now the rockabilly singer had been dumped.

"They didn't even let me know or *nothin'!*" he shouted angrily. "*Ohhh,* I blew right up in the club! It's a wonder they hadn't thrown me out. I was so burnt up and mad what they pulled on me, and after I did all that hard work! But," and he snickered, "they pulled it on their own self and didn't know it. See, Roger wanted to know if I knew publicity agents in L.A."

A sly grin on his face, Merritt explained that he had arranged Jack Oliphant to serve as Patterson's publicity agent. Oliphant was Merritt's former publicity agent when Merritt recorded for American Records. Oliphant had represented Sophie Tucker in the 1930s and 1940s. "You know, everything was clean back then," Merritt said. But in the 1960s, Oliphant changed. For one of Merritt's songs, "Liverpool," Oliphant rewrote Merritt's bio to read that Merritt, while in the Army, had fallen in love with a nurse in Korea during the war, even though Merritt had never been in Korea.

"When Roger, Bob, DeAtley, and Pat Mason went to New York, they took Oliphant, see, to set up a big cocktail party in Manhattan or somewhere. They had champagne, hors d'oeuvres, and the whole thing. Afterwards, Bob Gimlin went back to Yakima, and Prentis Beck found out from him how it turned out. Prentis said only one person showed up!" He burst into wild laughter, vengeful fire flashing in his eyes.

And this, after all Merritt had done to help Patterson make his documentary near the South Fork and to copyright the name "Bigfoot."

Merritt was furious. "I had worked hard!" He hung his head. "It pretty well got me," he said glumly. "Did all that stuff." He shook his head.

"Do you feel you were supposed to get some return out of it?"

"Yeah, wouldn't you?" he challenged me, staring at me in resentment. "If you went to L.A., took your time, and did all these things, what do you think?"

I played dumb. "Sure, but wasn't there a contract written up, among you and others?"

"No, no, we never did a copy of it!"

"It was kind of a gentlemen's agreement?"

"Yeah, I knew Roger all my life, and I figured I'd be treated fair. I didn't ever really blame Roger 'cause they done him pretty bad, too. I mean, they took over, and once they got control he was—"

"Who's 'they'?"

"Al DeAtley and Pat Mason and stuff. I happened to introduce Pat to them, and he put some money into it. Al DeAtley is basically. . . ." He said bitterly, "DeAtley came in at the last. He came in when he saw that things were going to make money. We were dreamers, and he wasn't a dreamer. We were the pioneers of it. We know how it goes in life. The one with the money holds the reins or pellets, you know, and that's what happened. I really had a bad taste in my mouth about DeAtley because he had millions of dollars, and I worked hard. It took the last money I did to do it, and I didn't have *nothin'*. I had money hardly to feed my family. And that's what I got out of it. But because I had so many other irons in the fire in show business and stuff, I let it go. Because I had a hit record. It took off. 'Buffalo Grass,' I mean, it was swampin' the nation. I didn't have the money to back it, and it was on my label, see. I mean, it was a hit! We were gettin' calls from Elvis's producer and RCA and all these big companies, and I didn't even know what to do with it, 'cause I had never done it, the other end of the business, so I lost a hit record and, uh—"

To me, Merritt seemed a luckless artist whom people took advantage of, a man who had potential but not the backing to develop his dreams. Or he was always second fiddle. Gene Vincent's face on the albums tacked on the wall seemed to be lording over the little guitarist.

"Your friendship with Roger changed?"

"It changed, but I still loved him like my own brother, you know. He got so far out in the left field for a long time there we didn't hardly ever speak to each other."

"And this is after the famous movie?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. They were makin' *big money*, and he's goin' to Thailand. He went everywhere."

I ran my finger down my list of questions. I asked him what he knew about American National Enterprises (ANE) in Salt Lake City. ANE was apparently the first film company to buy rights to Patterson's footage.

"They were big bean ranchers down in Oregon," said Merritt. "They took the thing over. They were the biggest cutthroats. I called them and says, 'You guys owe me.' They said, 'We don't owe you nothin'!' Roger brought them in as investors, and they took over, and Roger and DeAtley finally sold the whole thing out to them. I don't think they got a whole lot, but these guys had big money. They took over control, and they let me know it, too. They said, 'It's ours, we got it.' Yeah, the whole thing. The whole Bigfoot rights. The copyrights and everything."

"The copyrights that you had set up?" I said. "How did they manage to do that?"

"Well, they paid somebody off. I think they bought it from Al DeAtley. I really believe that. I called them after I found out. I traced 'em down. Roger told me, just before he died, or Al DeAtley."

"DeAtley," I said. "He seems to be a somewhat mysterious figure in this. He provided money to help produce the Bigfoot movie, but did you ever meet him?"

"Well, I knew Al DeAtley well," he said sourly. "He knew I had money comin'."

"His interest was just making money as well?"

"Right. You know, he didn't care about me. He knew I worked on it. I was buggin' him to death, but Al DeAtley didn't like it at all. There was just a whole lot of complicated things. Some of them I can't even remember. I do know one thing, it was just another dirty deal I got pulled on me, and I got lots of them in this business, so, I just chalked it up as hard knock school, you know."

I shifted Merritt's attention to Patterson's hoop toy.

The toy resembled one that Merritt played with as a child, he said. "It was called a 'hoop and guide.' It was made from the metal band wrapped around a wagon wheel. And you make it go around like that, in the dirt or on the street."

Patterson's hoop was made of plastic and eighteen inches to two feet in diameter. Patterson smashed a Prince Albert tobacco can and nailed the can on the end of the stick and used it to push the hoop. "Roger would do anything. He liked old-time toys, and he said, 'This is gonna make us rich! Look at this thing!'" Merritt laughed. "He was goin' down Sunset Boulevard with it. He'd go real quick with it."

"He thought he could actually sell it?"

"Oh, yeah. He figured I knew some people with money. He was always doin' things. One time he tried to rig up a little snowmobile, like a snow sled thing with a prop on it. That's one of the things that didn't work. One time he took McClellan Army saddles, rebuilt them, and made little western saddles out of 'em. He actually used 'em on those horses. He was really talented, Roger was. He could make a lot of things, you know."

I asked Merritt to give me more details about the Bigfoot headquarters in Merritt's house. Patterson would come over, Merritt said, and they would talk about Bigfoot, "or Buck Owens," the country western star. Patterson racked up a $350 phone bill for Merritt to pay. "He always just run up phone bills. He never did pay it, but I didn't hold it against him 'cause I thought I was going to make money back, too, you know." He paused. "I didn't make nothin'."

I asked Merritt about Bob Gimlin.

"Bob was workin' breakin' horses and stuff, so he didn't come a lot. He had a nice place there in Union Gap. He had a nice ranch house and corrals. He had so much gift of making people like him. He was real, he has a lot of charisma, and he just really has a lot of drive. Well, Roger did, too, and so, uh, when we all got together, there was a lot of enthusiasm, you know what I mean?"

What about Pat Mason? He seemed an interesting character in Patterson's schemes.

"I called him up to talk about Bigfoot. I didn't see why all of us couldn't have got rich, you know."

Getting rich. I went with Merritt's theme. "What were you going to get rich off of?"

"The movie and—"

"—and other products?" I interjected.

"Products. Yeah, yeah, all this stuff."

"So Mason got interested in it?"

"Yeah, he put some money in it, but he dropped me, too, in a way. 'Cause he didn't hold up for me. When I figure people do me a favor, I figure on doin' them one, you know? Evidently, he didn't think that way. I'll still treat him good; he's ninety-two years old."

I still wanted to know more about Patterson and Gimlin's early morning visit to Merritt's house. "He asked you to go down to Bluff Creek, and you didn't go?"

"Yeah."

"Roger was really mad?"

"Well, he wasn't really mad, but he was aggravated. He really got upset about it."

"Why do you think he was angry?"

"'Cause, I hate to say this, but I think I told him the night before I'd go with him. The more I think about what happened, I think I did tell him I'd go down there, and I backed out. And I usually never back out on anything, and I think that's what it was."

"And why did you back out?"

"My wife at the time and I were into it over me goin' and stuff. Because I had already went that other trip with Roger, and she was pretty disappointed."

"The copyright thing?"

"Yeah, yeah."

Patterson came by to pick up Merritt at 4:00 A.M. The Merritts met him at the door. "When he came in," Merritt laughed, "he just kept saying, 'You gotta go down!' I says, 'I'm not goin', Roger, I just don't want to go.' And he'd say, 'You promised this and that.'"

"He was upset with you?"

"Yeah, he did and her, too."

Why, I wondered, did Patterson insist with such passion that Merritt accompany him and Gimlin? Was it money to make the trip? Or was Merritt to fulfill some other purpose? I noticed that unlike in his first interview, this time Merritt made no reference to the rain storms that supposedly discouraged him from driving with Paterson and Gimlin to Northern California. Was something going on here?

"Bigfoot was a passionate interest of Roger," I said.

"It was totally an obsession. He was goin' to make money with it. I mean if you found gold, you wouldn't just want to carry it around in your hand."

"Do you feel he wanted to make money on this *before* he shot the footage?"

"Oh, yeah," he said emphatically.

"He was selling the book."

"Oh, definitely. *Definitely!*"

"Did he ever tell you that he wanted to make money?"

"Well, yeah, but he didn't have to. We knew he did."

"But do you remember him saying, 'I'm going to make money off this'?"

"Well, you're writin' the book, right?" Merritt suddenly turned angry, a shrewd expression consuming his face. "What ya doin' it for? For free? I mean, you want to make money off it, don't you? I'm not gonna make *nothin'* off of it. You are. You see what I mean?"

"Right."

"I mean, yeah, I definitely know he was."

"The reason why I bring it up, Roger never seemed to have a job. He seemed to have *projects*."

"He was this self-made person," Merritt said, his leg bouncing. "I've never seen no one else like him. I'll be honest with ya. He lived on dreams, and he did what he wanted to do, not what someone else wanted him to do. Roger would never do somethin' that someone else wanted him to do. One time he was raisin' cows, I think twelve head. He was so mad because somethin' had happened to the fence or somethin'. He come over there [to his neighbors] one night and beat up on those people, and it was terrible." This happened before Merritt and Patterson joined the Army.

"He was a man who wanted to make his own way?" I ventured.

"Yeah."

"According to his own rules?"

"Yeah, right."

"He didn't want anyone to tell him—"

"Self-made man," he said. "It wasn't that he was haughty. Roger just didn't like the way everything else was run, for one thing. And he didn't follow—dance to the drums that they played, you know. He did his own."

"And Bigfoot was a way for him to survive and make a living."

"Well, he had found a new gimmick," Merritt said and grinned. "And even without it, if he had never seen this creature, he had found somethin' different. And when Roger found somethin' different, he would get on it. If somethin' would have came along more interesting, if it was bigger, he'd probably just jumped on that."

"One or two final questions. The famous movie, you've seen the Bigfoot striding along. . . ."

"Seen lots of it, yeah."

"Do you think it really is a Bigfoot, or a hoax? Could it actually be a guy in a suit?"

He hung his head and reflected for a few moments, then looked up at me. "I tried to scrutinize it, I tried, really. I don't want to do nothin' that's against Jehovah or the Bible or anything. I think it must be real. I mean, if anyone would make up a lie like that and try to pull somethin' like that, I think it's the worse thing you could ever do, is to try to pull somethin' like that just for money or the general public, or for any reason, because I don't like a lie, and Roger acted like he never liked anything false. Now if he did that, that showed he would be one of the most false people I've ever met or will meet. He would be a totally different person than I knew."

"Than what you knew him to be?"

"He was crazy, did a lot of crazy things." Merritt's eyes had grown dark, weary. "But there's one thing. When he got on a project, he tried to finish it, and he had a real brilliant mind." A bit of life returned to his face. "We tried, him and I, to make a Volkswagen commercial once. We shot film up in the mountains, just him and I, and my ex-wife, or somebody. We shot loading them horses back and forth in that Volkswagen van, to show that you could haul horses in it." He laughed uproariously. "He'd pour water and make it look like he was sweatin'."

"So you thought you could sell it?"

"We thought we'd sell it. Make some money, yeah. Sell the whole idea. But anyway," his voice tapered off.

"Any final thoughts about Roger Patterson you want to give me?"

"Well, even though I got really messed up on the thing and didn't get a fair shake, I still considered him my friend. I had faith in what Roger was doing. Anything he did, I liked to be part of it, because he was exciting, and the guy was always doing somethin' crazy. There's never been another Roger Patterson. I've never met *anyone on the whole earth* like Roger. *No one.* He wasn't hardly five foot tall, and he was just kind of a mighty person. I never was into Bigfoot that much and never will be, I don't think. 'Cause I'm into Bible stuff and tryin' to do what's right. But if it's real, it's real. If it ain't, it ain't. That's all I have to say about it. All I do know was I've always heard that sayin', 'Where there's smoke, there's fire.' Meaning, like, Roger ain't the only person ever seen these Bigfoot things. You know, that's what got him goin' because there had been all these other things happening. So I'm not gonna judge it. There's been so many reports over hundreds of years, I mean. If they made it up, well. . . . There's nothin' in it for me. *Nothin'. Nada!* I ain't askin' for no publicity or nothin', I've already got all I need, and I'm not that famous neither, but I'm known over in Europe pretty well."

I turned off my recorder. The interview had drained him, and he was visibly relieved it was over. Suddenly, he wheeled his chair around and fired up his synthesizer and, pumped with new energy, played parts of songs he was writing, babbling all the while. Music, clearly, was his greatest love. Later, in the living room, he preached passionately to us about the Jehovah's Witnesses. Finally, we shook hands and said good-bye.

Outside the night air was cold and crisp. The interview had drained us, too, but we had gained valuable, new information. For the next two hours, as we drove home, Pat and I reviewed the facts. Jerry Lee Merritt had served Patterson's purposes. He was a Hollywood connection—and Patterson's potential road to riches. Both men needed each other. In the summer of 1967, his relationship with American Records at an end, Merritt was on the edge of bankruptcy. Most importantly, Patterson and Merritt went to Hollywood *before* October 20, 1967, not only to copyright the name "Bigfoot," but also to seek investors for Patterson's documentary-in-progress and Patterson's toy hoop. These facts alone, and the fact that Patterson was shooting his Bigfoot documentary only months before his incredible find at Bluff Creek, deepened my suspicions that the Bigfoot footage was phony. Why did Patterson so desperately want Merritt to accompany him and Gimlin to Bluff Creek? Merritt's marriage seemed to be under strain. Was this because Merritt kept supporting Patterson financially? I sensed that Patterson was attempting to control Merritt and to use him.

Most interesting were the alleged Bigfoot creatures visiting Merritt's property. Merritt had suspected that the tracks on his property and the hairy creature staring through the window at his ex-wife were fake. And what about the Bigfoot that walked only on one foot? What about the Bigfoot shrieking in pain as Tip hung onto the creature's testicles? This puzzled us. Typical Bigfoot reports describe a huge, powerful creature standing close to seven feet or taller, a virtual giant, with massive, muscular arms and shoulders. Why did this Bigfoot let itself be attacked by a mere dog? Why didn't it instantly snap Tip's neck with a single blow? Interestingly, Merritt said the Bigfoot was shrieking like a *man* in pain. I found it odd that the Bigfoot retreated up Merritt's driveway to make its escape on Ahtanum Road where drivers could have sighted it. Patterson's behavior afterward—building the lookout tower and mounting it into a tree—was either the act of a true believer, or, as Merritt theorized, was Patterson's attempt to advertise "Bigfoot country," which was conveniently located next to the western town. Strange, Bigfoot suddenly started to appear on Merritt's property, right after Patterson started visiting him.

It all had the smell of fakery. And Merritt had expected to get rich from Patterson's Bigfoot documentary. He said that Al DeAtley screwed him over, and even his former manager, Pat Mason. Twenty-six years after Patterson's death, Merritt was still angry over how he had been treated. It was a fascinating story of treachery and betrayal. I was amazed that Merritt still had such fond feelings for Patterson. He even admired him. "He was an artist. He was a genius," he marveled. "He'd do anything. Roger didn't do nothin' halfway." And, I thought, when it came to making money without working for a living, Patterson had few peers.

Once back in the apartment, Pat and I sat at our computers and started transcribing the tapes that were propagating like rats. I mulled over my leads. Merritt had given me the name and phone number of his son, Larry.

A piano player in Nashville and the owner of a small recording company, Larry was eager to give me a phone interview. In 1967 he was nine years old, and he frequently slept over at Patterson's house to play and ride horses with Patterson's children. "Before the movie project really hit big," Larry remembered, Patterson lived in a house five miles up the South Fork of Ahtanum Road. Later the Pattersons moved into a house owned by Willis Mondor, Patty's father, located near the Tampico Store.

Larry remembered "some little sheds with stuff in 'em" behind Patterson's house. One shed held a tack room. "He used to make saddles there. And he had a VW car and a VW van. And he was always talking about Bigfoot. He believed it, sleeped it. That was Roger, that was his whole life. He come up with a lot of different ideas. He was always coming up with stuff."

Like the cowboy hat that he sealed with wax so the rain would roll off it. And the old-time swivel chair with binoculars mounted on it so Patterson could look for Bigfoot while sitting down. And the three-foot pole with the little platform on top to hold fruit to attract Bigfoot. Patterson would sweep the dirt smooth around the pole so it would hold clear impressions of the Bigfoot's tracks. And the old-time, box-shaped, black camera with the oval, silver dish on it that held big flash bulbs so Patterson could photograph Bigfoot if it ever looked into his window at night. And Patterson's grape press he used to press concord grapes he bought every year in the lower Yakima valley. The juice was an ugly brown, and Patterson stored it in plastic jars, like those he used to hold his plaster of Paris, and gulped it down. "He thought it would heal him," Larry said. "And he ate oats and raisins mixed together and alfalfa tablets and honey, no sugar ever. He didn't eat meat, but I saw him eat a salmon once."

Larry accompanied Patterson and his cowboy buddies one day in the filming of Patterson's Bigfoot documentary. "His dream was tryin' to come together, you know," Larry said. When Patterson's Bluff Creek footage became a sensation, Patterson got a call from a man in Thailand who claimed he had a Bigfoot trapped in a cage. Patterson flew to Thailand. "It was a phony story," said Larry, "but he come back with a tiger skin and the skins of a mongoose, a cobra, and a leopard."

Larry remembered the days he lived in his father's "Bigfoot headquarters" in the Ahtanum Valley. He corroborated his father's account of the Bigfoot that invaded the property and was attacked by Tip. He also remembered the Bigfoot tracks in the driveway, as well as the huge "bird-cage" lookout tower.

Larry was happy to give me his mother's phone number. She still lived in Yakima.

Soon I was on the phone talking to Florence Showman (née Merritt). I first introduced the subject of Bigfoot. Florence confirmed Jerry Merritt's story. She described how one evening she was looking through the windows of the basement door that opened onto the back yard of the Merritts' house. Staring at her was a hairy, apelike being with reddish-brown hair hanging down from its head to its shoulders. The creature was partially grinning, and one of its hairy arms was extended toward her. She let out a cry and ran upstairs and screamed for Jerry. Not long after, Patterson came over and found some tracks supposedly left by the intruder. This first incident occurred in the summer of 1966 or 1967.

Her next sighting was of the Bigfoot in the driveway. She pinpointed this episode to May 1968; she had just come home from having surgery.

I guided her memories to Patterson.

"I first met Roger when Jerry and I were living in Los Angeles." The Merritts had not yet returned to Yakima to settle into the soon-to-be "Bigfoot headquarters." "Roger was on business checking on stuff, but I don't know what. He came to see Jerry. I remember Roger talked about writing songs and recording them. And he was going to write a book."

Interesting. Patterson states in his book that in 1964 he had "business" in Los Angeles.[1] Was that "business" to visit Merritt?

I jumped to the mid-1960s. She recalled the huge lookout platform. Patterson had installed stands on it to hold night-vision binoculars and other viewing instruments. She was afraid the heavy structure would fall from the cottonwood tree and kill her children. "There's no way it's going to fall," insisted Patterson. The next morning, a wild wind storm blew, and the contraption thundered to the ground. "I guess you was right," said Patterson sheepishly.

Undeterred, Patterson dragged the shattered structure into the Merritts' barn. He installed the swivel chair, described by Larry, on the platform. Whenever the Pattersons visited the Merritts, Patterson left Patty and his children inside the house and sat alone for hours in the barn, spinning around and gazing through the binoculars into the night for Bigfoot. Sometimes he even climbed onto the barn roof and stayed there throughout the night while Patty and the kids fended for themselves. "I don't know how he got up on the roof," said Florence. "It was slanted."

Did she remember Patterson's documentary?

"Yes, I remember the film he was making. He wanted to use my black cat. He was going to let the dogs chase it like it was skeered or something. I said, 'You'll have to write that out of the movie because I don't want my black cat up in the mountains.' I also remember taking pictures of Roger sitting around a campfire at Tampico. He was going to use them in his book or whatever. I took pictures of him in his western outfit sitting on his horse."

Patterson visited the Merritts nearly everyday, without warning, and would stay sometimes four hours at a time, using their phone for free or jabbering with Jerry or scrawling out songs. "Roger was more or less using the basement of our house for a meeting place," she said. "He had a lot of people coming there. He told me one day that if he ever caught a Bigfoot, he would put it in the window-less room in the basement connected to Jerry's studio. I told him, 'Well, I wouldn't want one in this house!'"

I asked, "Do you remember Patterson stopping by to ask Jerry to go with him to California?"

"Jerry couldn't go with them. Roger said when he came back this time, he hoped he had a film to show everybody that it wasn't faked."

I rapidly wrote down her statement. "Well, any final feelings about Roger?"

"He just had his funny ways."

Over the next few days, I reviewed the Merritt tapes and notes. The Merritts had deepened the context of Patterson's life in the critical years of 1966 and 1967. But who should I interview next? I knew Bob Heironimus was my hottest lead. But I wanted to completely tie off the Merritt story first. Part of that story was Pat Mason, Merritt's former agent. Just like Al DeAtley (who was also moving quickly to the top of my rapidly growing list of witnesses), Merritt had told me that Mason, too, had cashed in on Bigfoot.

NOTE

1. Roger Patterson, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* (New Westminster, BC: Pyramid Publications, 1996), p. 15.

8

PAT MASON

Roger in my book wasn't a real smart guy. And Roger knew nothing about promotions.

—Pat Mason

Klunk! Klunk! The latches on my briefcase snapped open. I lifted the lid and slipped my hand inside and removed a manila folder marked "Pat Mason." I snapped the briefcase shut and set it next to me on the floor. To get closer to the old man in the wheel chair, I edged my thighs forward until I was nearly falling off the old wicker sofa. I opened the folder.

"I thought up Paul Revere and the Raiders," the old man said, his voice dry and hoarse. His face was striking—clear, liquid blue eyes, large ears, and a prominent, strong-boned skull wrapped in leathery skin gouged deep by age lines that had cut a slow, steady course down his cheeks for ninety-two years. He wore jeans, a blue and green striped shirt, and large red suspenders. "I remember the night I named them right here in Seaside. They were sitting right there where you're sitting." He pointed.

"Really?" I glanced at the worn pads on the sofa under me. For an instant I sensed the faded afterglow of the 1960s.

Pat Mason, Jerry Merritt's agent and an agent to famous country western stars, supported Roger Patterson in a bid to profit from the "Bigfoot hunter." Photo by Pat Long.

"Yes," he rasped. "See, the band was called Like, Long Hair. Mark Lindsey was the lead singer. I came up with their goofy uniforms and a better name."

I slipped the sheaf of papers from the folder. "Looks like you've had quite a career, Mr. Mason." I leafed through the pages printed from the Rockabilly Hall of Fame Web site.

Alta, Pat Mason's wife, walked into the room. She was petite with pearl-gray hair and a cheerful smile. "Would you like something to drink?"

Pat, my wife, said, "No thanks." Pat sat in an old wooden folding chair next to me, her hands in her lap, anticipating the next surprise in the Roger Patterson story.

"No, thanks," I said.

I returned to the Rockabilly pages. Turning them, I could see Pat Mason age before my eyes. In one photo he was thirteen, standing in snow on the Yakama Indian reservation next to his brother Orin. Both were smiling, and they wore laced boots, knickers, little coats, and soft woolen caps typical of the period. It was 1923 in the next photo. Mason, sixteen, was standing with a dozen classmates next to the Mount Brook School near Mount Adams on the western edge of the reservation. Then, suddenly Mason was an adult, grinning into the camera, and wearing a white cowboy hat, a western shirt, and a silk tie. "Pat Mason, in 1951, when he first started booking," read the caption.

"I was feeling fine until that damn spider bit me," Mason said forlornly.

I looked up at him. "A spider?"

"A black widow spider jumped on him a few months ago," Alta said in a high-pitched voice. She sat down in a chair near her husband.

"I almost died," he winced. "I was in the back yard. It was on the fence, and it jumped on me."

I thought, After ninety-two years of life, this man could have died, not of old age, but from a spider bite?

"My leg got infected." He frowned. "I can't walk very well."

"I'm sorry to hear that," and I turned to the next page. Here was Mason, on his sixtieth birthday, with singer Buddy Knox standing between them, his arms wrapped around their shoulders. Mason, then sixty-nine, was in front of a microphone with Dorsey Burnette, belting out "There Was a Tall Oak Tree." A year later, he was posing with Roy Orbison. Suddenly he was eighty-one with Johnny Cash at the convention center in Seaside, Oregon, Mason's home town, poring over an old publicity book of Cash's. Now, hair thinner and grayer, more stooped, Mason and an elderly Alta were on either side of Little Jimmy Dickens at the Grand Ole Opry. The year: 1992.

I scanned more pages. Mason had retired in 1980 after thirty years of promoting dozens of famous recording artists: Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Horton ("The Battle of New Orleans"), Bill Haley ("Rock Around the Clock"), Ray Price, Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Snow, Fats Domino, Little Richard, The Drifters, Willie Nelson, and on and on. He even handled Elvis Presley in his early days.

"You've had quite a career," I said in amazement.

His fleshy, ruddy lips broke into a smile. “Willie Nelson still calls me.”

Mason’s promoting career began at age forty-three, an amazing transformation in his middle years. “What did you do before you became a booking agent?” I asked. I shuffled the sheets back into the folder.

Alta spoke up. “Pat was a land surveyor.”

Mason explained that his father cared nothing about education—he wouldn’t let Pat go to high school. So, after finishing the eighth grade, Mason followed his sister to Long Beach, California, where she planned to marry her sweetheart. Mason entered Long Beach Poly High to learn land surveying. He landed his first job at seventeen.

“I ran the original power line out of the Bonneville Dam down through the Willamette Valley in Oregon,” he said in his rough-edged voice. “I did the original survey of the Grand Coulee Dam.”

“I’ll be darned.”

“I carried a transit on my back and camped out along the way.”

“How long did you do land surveying?” I edged the recorder closer.

His silver brows knitted. “It would have been from 1925 to 1940.”

His mind was remarkably intact for a man his age.

“How did you become a booking agent?”

Alta stood up and approached me and Patricia. She opened a heart-shaped, gold locket hanging around her neck. We leaned forward and peered inside at a tiny photo of a smiling Mason and Alta. Alta recounted how she fell in love with Pat in 1940 at a roller skating rink in Albany, Oregon.

“I remember when Pat came in to the rink.” Alta’s eyes twinkled. “He was very tall.”

“I was staying at a rooming house at night after I finished surveying during the day,” Mason smiled. “I had been married before, but my first wife got religion.”

“He fell down,” she laughed, “and I picked him up.”

“I didn’t know how to skate,” Mason said. “I told myself I’d pick out the best female skater and learn from her how to skate.”

After Alta picked him up, they fell in love.

Alta briskly walked to the bedroom. She returned and placed on the table a folder containing glossy photos. As all four of us went through the stack, the Masons used the photos to tell their story.

After Mason and Alta married in 1943, they longed to build their own skating rink. So they built the Wagon Wheel Park between Camas and Washougal, Washington, on the Evergreen Highway. Enchanted by music, Mason got a job as a disk jockey at KVAN in nearby Vancouver. Famed country western star Willie Nelson, then an unknown, was looking for a job, too, and Mason hired him for twenty-five dollars a day.

In addition to skating, the Wagon Wheel Park featured dancing and dining, or as the sign on their establishment read, “music, fun, and refreshments.” At this time, Nashville stars were playing in the Coliseum in Portland, just across the Columbia River, but there wasn’t any place for the fans to dance on Saturday nights after the shows ended. So the Masons invited the bands to play at the Wagon Wheel on Saturday nights. Fans flocked to the Masons' nightclub as did the entertainers, including Willie Nelson, who by now had his own fledgling band. Mason served as the emcee. The live, Saturday night music was broadcast on KVAN. "That's how I started booking bands," Mason smiled.

Alta gently tapped a photo: "That's us." Contentedly, Mason brushed the photo with his thick, knobby fingers. The Masons, young and beautiful, were poised immobile in the photo, their fingers intertwined, their arms embracing each other as they whirled forever on their roller skates at the Wagon Wheel.

Finished, Alta closed the folder.

"Can you bring me my stuff?" Mason asked her. She returned with another folder. As Mason opened it, I glimpsed a postcard within. On the postcard strode Patterson's Bigfoot, frozen in its own time. The Bigfoot glared at me, giving me "the look."

"So how did you, a famous booking agent, get involved with Bigfoot?" I asked.

"It was Jerry Merritt," he rasped. "I was on the road with Little Richard, and I had booked him in Yakima at the Armory downtown." A local publicist had convinced Mason to book a local sensation, Jerry Lee and the Pacers, Merritt's band, as a warm-up act to Little Richard. Representing Gene Vincent at the time, Mason hooked Merritt up with Vincent as his lead guitarist.

"And somehow you met Roger Patterson?"

"Yes." At Merritt's place on Ahtanum Road, Mason remembered. "Jerry and Roger had already made up their mind that there was a Bigfoot. They were looking for a Bigfoot a long time before anybody else."

"Why did you, a professional booking agent, become interested in Bigfoot?"

"I was born in Boise, Idaho, but I lived until I was fifteen on a ranch next to the Yakama Indian reservation." He rested his arms on the sides of his wheelchair. "I was aware of Bigfoot stories when I was a boy. Me and my brother hunted cougars with a hound dog and a little terrier. I never saw a Bigfoot when we went hunting. I've hunted all my life, and I've never got a bead on a Bigfoot. It's hard for me to think that some hunter out in the woods hasn't shot one of them."

I studied Mason's face. Here was skepticism about Bigfoot's existence, but strangely enough, he had become attracted to Patterson. Perhaps it was because Mason grew up in the Pacific Northwest where tales of Bigfoot flourished.

"I wrote a song called 'Bigfoot Wiggle,'" Mason said, and he rummaged though the pages in his folder.

He gestured at the folder, and I leaned forward and picked up a worn sheet of paper. "The Bigfoot Wiggle," I read out loud, "Lyrics by Seldon Mason." I arched my brows. "You're real name is 'Seldon'?"

Mason chuckled dryly. "You can see why I call myself 'Pat.'"

"Music by Jack B. Ely." Nostalgia swept over me. "Is this the Jack Ely who sang 'Louie Louie'?" The mystique of "Louie Louie" resonated throughout the 1960s.

"Yes. He had the Kingsmen. Nobody really knows it, but it's pronounced 'Loo-aye, Loo-aye.'"

I read out loud the lyrics of "The Bigfoot Wiggle":

First they clap, then they squiggle
Dance around a-little
Do the Bigfoot wiggle.
Bigfoot's just a legend,
They'll tell you in the town,
But if you ask the mountain men,
They'll say he's still around.
Sometimes on a dark night when the moon is full and low,
They gather round and dance till dawn,
It's the Bigfoot, go man, go.
The Bigfoots gather and begin to dance,
They clap and holler, stomp and prance.
The mountains rumble as they rock and roll,
The canyons echo with go man, go . . . go man, go . . . go man, go.

"That's interesting," I said. "Can I have a look?" I slid Mason's folder closer to me. I began thumbing through old letters, newspaper clippings, and earlier versions of "The Bigfoot Wiggle." One version was the "Sasquatch Wiggle."

I closed the folder. "So then you met Patterson. How did you find out about him and his footage?"

"Probably from Jerry. Roger wanted me to help him. He was broke and was fumbling around with the film. Back then I was driving from Seaside to Portland every Monday and flying to Hollywood to work, then flying home for the weekend. At that time, I had some good connections in Hollywood. But I was pretty skeptical about it. So I made up my mind to find out if it was authentic or not. I wouldn't promote the film unless it was real."

"Here was an opportunity to make some money?"

"Yes." He placed his elbow on the arm of his wheelchair and rested his chin on the back of his hand. "I said to Roger, 'Let's take it down to Hollywood to one of those guys making movies and doing stories and see what they think.'"

"Did you pay for Roger's expenses to Hollywood?"

"Roger never had any money that I know of."

In the winter of 1967–1968 Mason contacted a producer in Los Angeles. "*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, or something. They put Roger's film on a big screen. After viewing it, they told Roger, 'If that's a fake, it's a better one than we can make.' But they weren't interested. We always got the same static, that it isn't real."

I raised my hand and flipped the cassette over to side B. "By the way, is it OK if Pat takes your picture?"

"Sure."

She fished her camera from her bag.

"So what did you do next?" I asked Mason.

He explained that he used his own money to edit the Bluff Creek footage into a twenty-minute movie. Aware of Patterson's documentary footage shot near the South Fork of the Ahtanum, Mason also edited that footage into the short feature. Mason played the narrator. The short was simply called *Bigfoot.* I thought, This sounds just like the other Bigfoot movie, the one DeAtley helped Patterson produce. I was confused.

"Did you ever meet Al DeAtley?" I asked in an attempt to clarify.

"Yes. Al DeAtley, other than giving some money to Roger, never had much to do with the Bigfoot thing at all. None."

Merritt had told me that DeAtley had set up a partnership with Patterson and Gimlin in Los Angeles shortly after Patterson shot the Bluff Creek footage. I told Mason this and that DeAtley had also edited the Bigfoot footage into a movie.

"I don't believe it." Stress consumed his face.

"You don't believe it?" I said, surprised.

"No." His eyes darted. "Boy, that's weird. . . . You're—you're saying Al—he went down there?"

"Yes. Maybe DeAtley never told you that."

"Maybe he *never did it*," he corrected me sharply.

"You think it didn't happen?" I heard the *whir-click* of Pat's camera after bursts of silver light brightened Mason's craggy face.

"I—I—I don't know. I don't know why Al would do that." Anger flushed his cheeks.

"You're saying Al didn't seem interested in Patterson's Bigfoot film?"

"I'm saying *it didn't happen.*"

Clearly, I had struck a nerve. For years and years, Mason must have thought that Patterson was the only one who worked with him to produce a Bigfoot movie. It seemed Patterson had kept Mason in the dark. I thought, Sounds like Patterson used Mason *and* DeAtley as two different money sources without either one knowing of the other.

I steered Mason, now seething, back to the short film *Bigfoot.*

Finally calming down, Mason plumbed his memories. "We showed *Bigfoot* first in Portland at the Bijou or something. I was amazed at how much interest it got. So many people would show up that you couldn't get into the damn place!"

Mason booked theaters throughout the Northwest for Patterson, handling all the advertising and promotions, and drove from theater to theater—small independents—showing *Bigfoot* with a sixteen-millimeter movie projector that he supplied. The movie was shown between two long features. "It was a sensation," Mason said. The theaters that showed *Bigfoot* received 20 percent of the proceeds from each showing. The remaining 80 percent Patterson and Mason split, after Mason reimbursed himself for all the expenses (gas, food, and lodging). Occasionally Patterson attended showings and spoke. But Mason did all the work.

"I'm confused," Mason said, returning to the DeAtley puzzle. "Al didn't want to have a thing to do with Bigfoot. Have you talked to Jerry Merritt about this?"

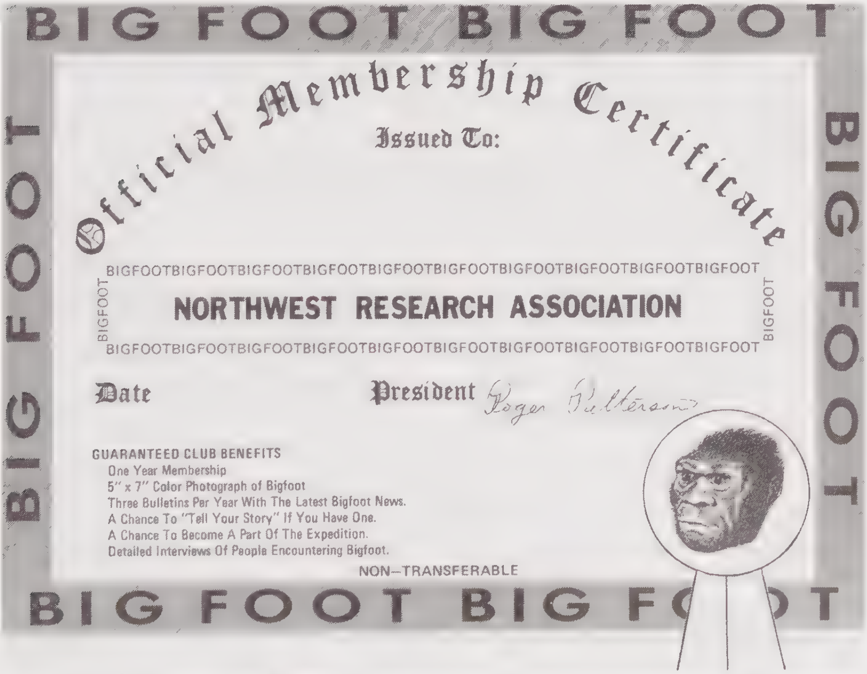
"Jerry went to Hollywood with Patterson to copyright the title, 'Bigfoot,'" I said.

He shook his head in disbelief.

"Do you want to take a break?" I asked. "You look tired." The last silver flash burst on his face, and Pat sat down and slipped the camera into her bag.

"You're not tiring me out, you're getting me confused. I think a lot of stuff you've got never happened. This DeAtley thing really baffles me because from day one none of the Bigfoot people ever mentioned DeAtley."

Again, I steered Mason back to *Bigfoot.* The movie began to monopolize his time, he recalled. In fact, after booking *Bigfoot* for four months, he stopped booking musical acts. In addition, he and Alta poured their energy, time, and money into supporting an organization called Northwest Research. This was the second time I had heard of this mysterious organization. It had a benign, neutral name with a seductive suggestion of science, the kind of name that the public can read anything into. Before driving to Seaside to interview Mason, I had stumbled across a reference to Northwest Research in *Reader's Digest*, January 1969 issue. Entitled "Does an 'Abominable Snowman' Lurk in the Rockies?" the article surveyed existing Bigfoot evidence and drew extensively from reports collected by Bigfooter John Green. In addition, the article prominently featured four frames from Patterson's footage. "Perhaps by the time you read this," the article stated, "Sasquatch's existence will have been proved. Roger Patterson, financed by



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BIG FOOT BIG FOOT

Pat Mason helped Roger Patterson sell memberships to the Northwest Research Association. "I gave Roger all the money," Mason said. Courtesy of Pat Mason.

$75,000 from the Northwest Research Association, of Yakima, Wash., a maker of documentary films, is continuing his search. This time he is using lures, dogs and tranquilizer guns hoping to capture a living specimen."

Seventy-five thousand dollars. That's a huge sum of money in the late 1960s. I told Mason about the article and the reference to the $75,000 to support Patterson and Northwest Research.

"Where did the money come from?" I asked.

Mason was visibly irritated. "I don't know where in the hell that came from!" He added grumpily, "It didn't happen."

Was the money Mason's or DeAtley's? *Somebody* was funding Northwest Research. I sensed there was some purpose to Northwest Research other than hunting Bigfoot. Mason's reactions to my questions about the shadowy organization suggested that I had triggered a memory he'd rather forget.

Mason said, "My wife and I started Northwest Research. That brought in *lots* of money for awhile. We published a newsletter and sold memberships." Eventually he and Alta garnered nearly one thousand members. "It was a *big, big, big* operation. We got *piles and piles* of letters. We couldn't keep up with it. It seems like it was a never-ending deal. I gave Roger all the money. To keep him alive."

Patterson had ideas for the newsletter, but he never wrote anything, said Mason. It was the Masons who did the writing and handled the entire production. This was an odd association, I thought. A wealthy booking agent to the stars hooked up with an unemployed, publicity-seeking, self-styled "Bigfoot hunter."

"Did Patterson ever have a job?" I asked.

"Never."

"Patterson was making his living off you. Wasn't that how Roger was getting through life—promoters were helping him sell his products, so-to-speak?"

"I helped him. No doubt about that."

"Why?"

Mason shrugged. "I wish I knew, I wish I knew," he said with evident regret. "Roger in my book wasn't a real smart guy. And Roger knew nothing about promotions. You know, I had a lifetime of promotions. Roger often talked at the wrong time. If I was talking and showing stuff, Roger would butt in. It seemed to me he never said the right thing."

"So he wasn't a very good businessperson?"

"Lousy." His age-spotted forehead crinkled. "I'm really surprised about this DeAtley thing," he said, still perplexed.

I remained puzzled. I thought of Patterson as broke and a lousy businessperson. So why would Mason do anything—let alone *everything*—for Patterson? Surely Mason knew he could make more money as a booking agent. Why else would he bet on Patterson unless it was a dream of big money? At the same time Mason seemed to feel genuinely sorry for Patterson. Perhaps it was a combination of money and sympathy.

Mason waved his gnarled, wrinkled hands. "I didn't think Roger was a liar," he said in a clear, innocent voice. "I was skeptical at first, but after I talked to a lot of people, I began to think, 'Well, it wasn't a fake.' Roger couldn't fake anything like that anyway. I liked Roger."

Mason also liked Bob Gimlin. "Bob never seemed to have any money, so I got him speaking jobs and stuff like that for a few dollars. At one time, while we were showing the film, we had Bob come along. He would stand up and talk about Bigfoot and help promote the movie and get paid. I liked him. He was a pretty nice person. DeAtley hated Gimlin, but I don't know why."

Mason's eyes were weary.

"It sounds like you caught the Bigfoot bug."

"Stupid," he said self-deprecatingly.

I was taken aback. "It was a stupid thing to do?"

"I could have made a lot more money doing other things," he said glumly.

"How much money do you think you put into it? I would suspect many, many thousands of dollars."

"Oh, yeah."

"How much money did you make on Bigfoot?"

"I probably broke even. I had to get back into booking to make a living. That crazy Dahinden," he suddenly remembered. "If you've ever seen anybody that got tangled up with Bigfoot who was really off his rocker, it was Dahinden. He thought he owned the rights to the film. I think he was going to sue me for something, but I can't remember what. He was really a nut."

Dahinden, I knew, was the world's first Bigfoot hunter. He was on my list of people to call.

I flipped open Mason's folder and thumbed through more pages. My eyes alighted on several interesting items. "Can we copy this material?"

"Yes."

Alta, busy in the kitchen, stepped into the living room. "There's a copier at the Safeway."

"Great. We'll go copy this and be right back." I pushed myself up from my awkward perch and stiffly walked to the door, Pat behind me.

"My back is killing me," I complained as we slowly walked down the steps into the fresh air. We slid into the car and rushed to the Safeway.

"They're a couple still in love after all these years," Pat smiled as we worked together to quickly copy Mason's file.

"True," I said. "Look, here's correspondence between Dahinden and Mason. I wonder what that's all about." I noticed the letterhead of an attorney. "Part of the Patterson story is in here!" I said excitedly. "Amazing. If we hadn't come here to interview Mason, the story would probably be lost for all time."

With copies in hand, we returned to the Masons. "Well, I only have a few more questions," I said.

Mason looked at me with baggy eyes.

"How long did you promote Patterson's film?"

He reflected. "Probably two years. We sold the whole damn thing to an outfit down in Eugene, the Olsons."

I knew that Mason was referring to ANE, the movie distributor. ANE had its headquarters in Salt Lake City, but family members of the owner, the Olsons, lived in Eugene, Oregon.

"Do you remember going to New York City with Patterson?" Merritt had told me Mason had.

"Yes. Roger was going to be filmed and put on a BBC documentary."

I could see that Mason was quite tired. "I don't have any more questions," I said. "I really appreciate your time. This has been fascinating."

I let loose of Bigfoot and stretched my legs out and sank back into the sofa. Alta brought out glossies of many of the stars Mason had represented, and Patricia and I stood up around the table and looked through them. Patricia, a country western fan, knew many of the faces.

"You know, I sang backup to Roy Orbison," Mason said, grinning. "Do you want to hear some music?" He hauled his large, tired body in his wheelchair over to a stereo system where he inserted a tape. Music wafted into the room from Saturday nights at the Wagon Wheel. The singing voice of a much younger Willie Nelson filled the room. The warbling of Roy Orbison's "Crying" seized my soul, and I found myself floating back to a faded, unknown time in the 1960s, mournful, lonely, without love. For an instant a memory bubbled to the surface of my mind but quickly fell away into the dark. Finally, we each shook the Masons' hands and said goodbye.

Before leaving town, we drove to a new steak house on the outskirts of Seaside, which the Masons urged us to see, Bigfoot's Pub 'n Grub. I laughed at the huge, brown, big-breasted Bigfoot in full stride cut out of plywood and bolted to the sign over the restaurant's doors. "Good ol' Roger Patterson," I said and snapped a photo, "what an influence you've had."

As we drove across the bridge into Washington, we discussed the interview. We wondered exactly how much money Mason had lost on his Bigfoot gig. Captivated by Patterson, he had put his normal booking business on hold. It was kind of sad: a highly successful booking agent drawn to a poverty-stricken cowboy with no business sense. And throughout their association, Patterson had done little, more likely none, of the work.

"At this point in this investigation," I said, "I just can't believe that Patterson's film was of a real Bigfoot. It was just a form of entertainment. Bigfoot was packaged and sold."

"It seems that way," she said.

"It's time to confront the issue of Patterson's truthfulness and the validity of his film head-on," I announced. "I'm going to call Bob Heironimus. If he was the Man in the Bigfoot Suit, then it's all over."

As we rushed onto the on-ramp and slid into the traffic on Interstate 5, I couldn't wait to get home.

9

BOB HEIRONIMUS

It appears to be there's some kind of local story going around in the Ahtanum Valley area that you were this guy that wore this ape suit.

—Greg Long to Bob Heironimus

Well, you know, I'm not gonna say, one way or the other.

—Bob Heironimus

On Saturday, December 5, 1998, I telephoned Bob Heironimus. A nondescript male voice answered. He identified himself as the man in question.

I introduced myself and the book project. "I'd like to interview you about Roger Patterson."

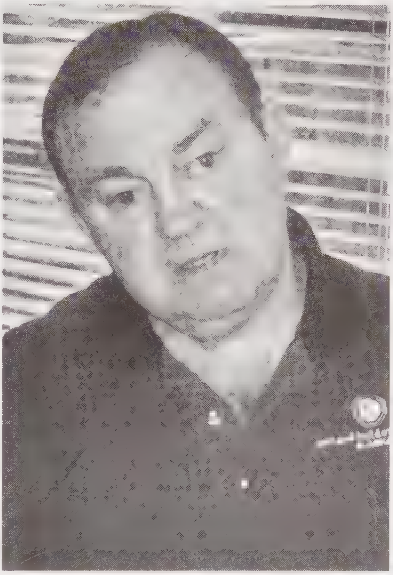
He was open to the idea, he said, but was running out the door on business. He was agreeable to talk the next day, though.

When I called the next day, he answered abruptly, "Hello!"

I introduced myself. "I called you yesterday."

"Um, yeah." His tone was defensive. "I can tell you all I know about Patterson in about five minutes."

"For the sake of accuracy, can I audiotape the interview with your permission?"



Robert (Bob) Heironimus, an amateur actor in Roger Patterson's Bigfoot movie shot on the outskirts of Tampico, Washington, and pegged by local residents as the Man in the Suit. Photo by Pat Long.

"Um, yeah. I guess so." He asked for my address and phone number, which I gave to him.

I began. "When did you first meet Roger Patterson?"

"Well, when I was in high school."

I concentrated on Heironimus's voice. It was mild and friendly, yet I could sense he was cautious.

"I think he tried to date my sister," he added.

"He was trying to date your sister?"

"Yeah, he'd come around to our place once in a while."

"What was the first thing you remembered about him?"

"Well, he was only about five foot tall, you know."

"Uh-huh." Patterson was three or four inches taller, others had said. I resisted leading him. I wanted him to talk freely.

"Are you aware of that?" Heironimus said.

"Yeah. It appears he was a pretty short guy."

"Yeah. But, I mean, he was built like Hulk Hogan. Huge, huge man for his size. I think he lifted weights most of his life."

"Uh-huh."

"He was a very powerful guy," he continued. "I think he rode a few broncs in the rodeo in his younger days, riding buckin' horses."

"Uh-huh."

"He used to come around. I remember the first time I ever seen him. He had a black Cadillac convertible."

Black Cadillac. I had heard this before. "Did he play football in high school?"

"I don't know," he said indifferently. "I just didn't pay much attention to him then."

"As I understand it," I said, "he went into the service for a while, and then he came back and lived in Yakima. Do you remember when he got his first interest in Bigfoot?"

"No, I don't. Uh, but like I said," he stumbled, "I didn't, you know, run around with him. I just knew him. He married a girl I grew up with. Pat Mondor was her name."

"Oh, I see."

I knew Heironimus was one of Patterson's amateur actors in his documentary shot on the South Fork. I inserted a mild hint of disbelief in my voice, as a test: "So you're saying you didn't pal around with him?"

"No, I didn't. Uh-uh."

"For a period of time in the 1960s he was trying to make a Bigfoot documentary—"

"Uh-huh," he said, projecting disinterest.

"—on the South Fork; and there's Bob Gimlin, and a guy named Jerry Merritt, and some other guys, were playing roles in this movie. Are you aware of that movie?"

"Yeah, I know something about that. Uh. . . ." A nervous twitch rippled through his voice.

"What do you know about that movie?" I said, increasing the pitch of my voice slightly.

"Well, I—you know," he fumbled, "I think more than a few people knew about the movie after it come out, you know."

Heironimus was referring to the Bluff Creek footage. I sensed he was trying to deflect my attention away from Patterson's South Fork documentary.

"Well, there's the famous movie of the Bigfoot walking across this open area down in Northern California, there's that movie—"

"Uh-huh." Apprehension was in his voice.

"—and then there was another movie he was doing on his own in the Ahtanum Valley. He was using a cameraman from a local television station, I think, to do this movie."

Slowly, he said, "Uh . . . huh."

"And Bob Gimlin and Jerry Merritt were two guys who were in this movie." Suddenly, I sprang the question on him: "Were you part of that movie?"

"No," he answered flatly.

Merritt had told me that Heironimus was in the documentary. He had identified Heironimus's image in the photo of the six cowboys that Lund had given me. There was Bob Heironimus, sitting on a horse.

"Are you aware of that movie that he was—?"

"No," he said. Then he caught himself, "It kinda, you know, rings a bell." He added, "I'm not really sure, you know."

"Uh-huh," I said.

He changed the subject. "But wasn't there supposed to have been some Pettijohn or somebody that had a sighting of a Bigfoot or something, somewhere around this part of the country?"

In *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?*, Patterson described the sighting of a Bigfoot by a Ken Pettijohn, a teenager living in the West Valley area of Yakima, out in the country. One night, while Pettijohn was driving home after dropping off a friend, a tall, hairy, two-legged creature stepped out on the road in front of his vehicle. Pettijohn slammed on his brakes. The creature approached and stared into Pettijohn's eyes. Terrified, Pettijohn sped off.

Interesting, I thought. Heironimus remembered Pettijohn after thirty-two years, but claimed he knew nothing of the documentary on the South Fork, of which he was part.

"Well, yeah, it was a some kind of a deal," Heironimus continued. "It was in the paper or on the news that somebody supposedly spotted a Bigfoot somewhere in this area."

I played dumb. "Oh, I see. I see."

I circled around, but cautiously. "OK, so there was this local documentary he was doing, and your name has come up a couple of times as someone who knew Patterson—"

"Yeah, I knew him," he admitted.

"—during that period of time."

"Yeah, I knew who he was, and I rode horses with him a couple of times, you know, and you know, this is just riding in the mountains. That wasn't any film documentary or anything."

Ah, I thought, now I'm getting some place. Heironimus had moved from his earlier statements that he didn't pal around with Roger Patterson to the fact that he knew him personally.

I decided it was time to surprise Heironimus. "Your name has come up in interviews that you were a guy who actually wore an ape suit."

"Who told you that?" he snapped.

"The Johnson family."

"Johnsons? How would they know?"

"I don't know. It appears to be that there's some kind of local story going around in the Ahtanum Valley area that you were this guy that wore this ape suit."

"Oh, I see. I see."

"Is there any truth to that?" I asked firmly.

"Well, you know, I'm not gonna—" He started stuttering. "I'm not gonna—" He seemed to be losing control. "I'm not gonna say, one way or the other."

"You're not going to say one way or the other?"

"No, not yet, nope."

Not yet? If Heironimus didn't wear an ape suit, either in the Ahtanum Valley or at Bluff Creek, why didn't he just say so?

I remained patient. "OK," I ventured. "I don't know where it's coming from, but in a couple of interviews they've mentioned your name. I'm not trying to be malicious. I'm just trying to get to some facts here, because Patterson was trying to make a movie that was a documentary about his travels, you know, and his hunt for Bigfoot."

"Uh-huh."

"And he was doing that apparently in 1967 in the Ahtanum Valley, and people independently of each other have said, 'Bob Heironimus was the guy in the ape suit.' And I feel compelled to ask you that because I'm trying to get to the facts."

"I know a little about that, and I'm not going to tell you right now or anybody else. Uh-uh. But the best thing you probably should do is to talk to Gimlin. I mean—"

"It would be better to talk to Gimlin?" I said. Why Bob Gimlin? I thought. I wondered if Heironimus was suggesting that Gimlin wore the suit.

"He knows more about this thing than I do."

Did Bob Gimlin know that the Bigfoot footage was a hoax? I wasn't about to let Heironimus off the hook. "OK, it sounds like there's some substance to the story about someone in an ape suit. I'm kind of hearing you say that."

"Well, you know, there could be, there might not be, there might not be anything to it."

"Oh. There might not be anything to it?" I played along with him.

"Uh-huh."

"If there *were* something to it, do you think Roger was just trying to make a scene for a movie?"

"I'm not sure, because he never did, you know, say a heck of a lot to me about anything."

At this point I was convinced that Heironimus was playing stupid.

To get Heironimus to open up, I needed to keep pressing. "So are you saying you weren't in that movie that he was producing?"

"Well, I'm not going to say that. No."

Ah! A contradiction from his earlier statement. "OK."

"I'm not gonna talk to anybody," he said forcefully, "you know, until I do a little research on this thing and tell what I know about it."

Research? What was there to research? If Heironimus had played Bigfoot, I felt he should simply admit it. "OK," I said.

"You know," he said, "this film has been shown probably fifty, sixty, seventy times all over the world."

He was deflecting me again. I went along with it. "Right, right."

"You understand? Even the Russian scientists studied it and—"

"Yeah," I said, "it's been shown for years. It's an old movie. And Roger Patterson's been gone, I guess, for about twenty-six years or something."

"Yeah, he died shortly after that."

"So, we're talking about something that happened decades ago," I said. "I want to get to the truth about who was Roger Patterson. He seemed like a really interesting guy. He was an artist, he was a singer, he was a rodeo rider, he was a very talented guy."

"And all I got to say," Heironimus said, "I never did run around with him very much, you know, what you call run around with him."

Then why not openly admit you had nothing to do with wearing an ape suit? I thought to myself.

"Hmm," I mused without inflection.

"I just knew him, you know. Most everybody did around here, this part of the country. Not everybody, but where he lived. I grew up, you know, up there where he lived."

"So did you live in the Ahtanum Valley?"

"We lived in Ahtanum, yeah. Tampico, in my younger days."

"So, when you lived in Tampico, were you a teenager?"

"Well, when I was in grade school. We moved down towards Yakima when I was a freshman in high school, or something like that. I was probably in the sixth or seventh grade when we moved down there."

"OK, so you've been living there in Yakima all your life, then?"

"I knew Roger's brothers over the years."

"Uh-huh."

"Like I said, I grew up with his wife."

"Huh. So during your younger years as you were growing up in that area, did you work on some of the ranches there, or how did you make a living there?"

"Oh, my dad was a logger. There's a logging company at Tampico, and my dad worked for them, but everybody knew everybody around there then."

"Yeah, it was probably a pretty small community."

"Yeah."

"So, your knowledge of Roger Patterson was that you knew who he was, and you rode horses with him sometimes?"

"Uh-huh."

"Do you remember a guy named Prentis Beck?"

"Uh, yeah. I think he died here a few years ago, too."

"What about your interest in Bigfoot in the 1960s? Were you pretty interested in that, or—?"

"Oh, not really," he said offhandedly. "I didn't have much, you know, interest in it. Uh, I just talked to them a couple of times about going with them maybe or something like that, searching for him."

"You mentioned Bob Gimlin as someone I ought to talk to about this story of this ape suit. He would know more about that?"

"Well, uh, I'm not sure, you know, if it was an ape suit, or, that," he stuttered, then caught himself, "that they're looking for, but him and Roger were best buddies."

"Right. Right."

"And, of course, you know that Roger—I mean that Bob was with Roger supposedly when they spotted this, you know."

"Yeah, down in Northern California." I put the conversation back on track: "Yeah. Well, this ape suit seems to be a real story around the Ahtanum Valley, and your name keeps being associated with it, and I don't know why."

I waited for Heironimus's response. Nothing but silence, long, cold, and unending. I prayed he wouldn't hang up on me.

"Hello?" I finally said.

"Yeah," he said weakly.

"I don't know why your name is associated with it."

"Well, like I say, you know," he said nervously and stuttered uncontrollably, "I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna, you know, tell everything that I know about this Bigfoot deal until, you know, I talk to the right people."

The right people? "Right," I said blandly.

"You know, you're writing a book, I mean, uh. . . ."

"When this film was finally shown, did Roger's personality seem to change at all? Do you remember?"

"Gosh, I don't know. I don't even remember being around him, you know, after this film come out."

I was determined to pin him down on the issue of his friendship with Patterson. "How many hours do you think you spent with Patterson? You said you didn't spend a lot of time with him. When you add all the hours up, how many hours would it be?"

"What do you mean? My whole life?"

"Yeah, yeah."

"I don't know. Maybe two days. You know, I was just a young fellah. He was ten, twelve years older than I am."

"So how old were you in 1967?"

"Oh, gosh. I don't know. Well, I'm fifty-seven now. I'll be fifty-eight next month."

Heironimus said he was born January 6, 1941. He would have been twenty-six in 1967.

We talked for a while about a variety of subjects I had been investigating. He remembered seeing one of Roger's Bigfoot casts, but as far as audio recordings of Bigfoot screams, he remembered none. He was aware of Merritt's western town: "Everybody knew about that. You couldn't miss it."

I asked Heironimus about his brothers. Les Johnson had said there were three of them. "Were they interested in Bigfoot?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. I don't think they even paled around with Roger."

Something was wrong here. Merritt had identified one of the men in Lund's photo as Howard Heironimus.

I tried one last time to trip Heironimus up. "So when you did go riding with Roger, you went up the South Fork and back in that area?"

"Yeah, North Fork, South Fork."

"The South Fork. Just to go riding?"

"Yeah, just riding around."

"It sounds like you were aware of this Bigfoot documentary that was being filmed there, sounds like that's what I'm hearing."

"I was aware of it, yeah."

Finally. Heironimus had moved from "I'm not really sure" about the documentary to "I was aware of it." I was convinced now that Heironimus was hiding the truth, and a great deal of it. I had heard enough.

I decided to end the interview before my aggressive tone closed him off from me: "Do you have any thoughts or memories about Roger Patterson you'd like to tell me?"

"Well, no, it's just like I told you, he was quite a character. Like you said, he was an artist, inventor, pretty good horseman."

"Was he kind of a showman?" I asked.

"You mean like showing horses?"

"No, such as he liked an audience."

"Oh, I don't know. I wasn't, you know, around that much, you know."

"Yeah. Yeah."

"Just a casual friendship," he said.

"Right. Well, thank you for your time."

"You betcha."

I hung up and sat back and rubbed my stiff neck. Then I rewound the tape and listened. I concentrated on each of Heironimus's words and analyzed their tone. I studied the rhythm of his answers, the pauses between each sentence, the junctures between each phrase. When I finished, I concluded that I didn't believe Bob Heironimus. He had attempted to hide the fact that he ran around with Patterson, had attempted to deny that he was part of Patterson's documentary. Most importantly, when it came to my ape-suit questions, he had stated that he wasn't going to say "one way or the other." He had become tongue-tied, evasive, contradictory. His refusal to take a position regarding this most critical issue was, as far as I was concerned, a dead giveaway: Bob Heironimus very well could be the Man in the Suit. I asked Pat to listen to the taped interview.

"He's lying," she said.

"We need to go confront him," I said. "We'll go right up to his house. And we'll go and knock on Gimlin's door." I opened an old, beat-up Yakima phone book. "Amazing. Look, they live on the same street! The two Bobs are practically neighbors." The fact rang with irony.

* * *

On December 19, 1998, Pat and I drove to Yakima. It was bright and clear, a bone-cracking fifteen degrees. We decided to approach Gimlin first. If we tried to interview Heironimus and he refused, he might call Gimlin and close Gimlin off to us, if Gimlin was also part of the hoax. We pulled into Gimlin's driveway. I could see behind the house a shed, corrals, and a hay barn. Then, suddenly, a hunched-over human form appeared walking toward the shed. The form appeared to be a male and wore a pair of tan coveralls. The form vanished into the shed. Gimlin! I had just had a Gimlin sighting!

Mrs. Gimlin answered the door. She was curt: "He doesn't do any interviews, period. You can try to call, but he will not do interviews, and I will not let him."

I was persistent. "I know a lot about Roger Patterson," I told her. "I know his motivations, I know his life."

She refused to budge.

I handed her my card, and we left and proceeded to Heironimus's house just down the street. "Hello," a man said, opening the door. He was tall, perhaps slightly over six feet. He held a small child in his arms, perhaps eighteen months old. This serious-looking man appeared as though like he had worked a lot with his body and hands.

"Hello. Are you Bob Heironimus?"

"Yes, I am."

I identified myself. "I'm here in person to see if I can do a follow-up interview with you regarding the suit issue."

He stared at me. His face was hard. "Well, I told you about everything I think I know about it." Clearly, my phone call had affected him.

"You know a lot more about it because your answers over the phone were basically waffling. You said, 'Well, I do know something, and I don't know something.' You said it twice. You allowed me to record the interview. I'm trying to get the truth, trying to get the facts."

"I'll just talk to my attorney, and we'll go from there," he said darkly.

Attorney? I was taken aback. "Fine, but you know, as I said, you allowed me to tape the interview."

"You asked me about Roger, I told you. . . ." His left brown eye was icy, but his right brown eye appeared opaque, lifeless.

I pressed on. "I know the story. I basically put it together. I've talked to numerous people here in this area in the last three weeks."

"So, you're gonna get rich off of this?" he said cynically.

"I'm not looking to get rich off of it. I'm trying to tell the story about Roger Patterson and this movie."

"I told you, you know, about Roger what I knew," he said adamantly.

"Now this was years ago, Mr. Heironimus, we're talking about years and years and years ago."

"Right. Thirty years."

I took a position on the film footage. "Personally, I think it was just a prank and, you know, you were a young man, everyone else was a young man, Jerry Merritt, you were. . . ."

"Yep," he said without emotion.

"There's a whole bunch of guys that I know about that were involved in making a movie basically out here in this area."

"Well, I'll tell ya—"

I interrupted: "To tell your story and get it factual and accurate and true, it's basically going to help your reputation in the long run."

"It doesn't matter to me," he said, a gloomy expression on his face. "I had nothing to do with it."

I had no physical evidence that Heironimus had worn a suit at Bluff Creek, but I had little faith in Roger Patterson's claims about the factual nature of his famous film. "I'm convinced that Roger Patterson was trying to create a Bigfoot."

"May have been," he said cleverly. He settled the child he was holding against him more securely.

"Yeah, well, I think that's what he was doing. I mean, it's pretty obvious that's what he was doing."

"Well, I'll talk to my attorney, and maybe we'll get back to you. I've got your number."

"I'm trying to get to the truth," I said, aware that I was losing ground. He stared at me. His face was expressionless. "This movie has been promoted as being an actual movie of a Bigfoot. You're just one part of the puzzle. You know, I don't want to project you as being a liar. This is something that happened years and years ago."

"I'll talk to my attorney."

"You have my phone number?"

"Right." He freed one hand from the child and slammed the door shut.

As we drove away, I felt both elated and alarmed. Elated because I had finally met the alleged Man in the Suit, the man so many people in the Ahtanum Valley had pegged, for some reason, as the actor in the Bluff Creek footage. Alarmed, because, for some reason, he was about to find an attorney now that I had showed up on his doorstep. Why? He had denied having anything to do with the movie on the South Fork. I turned to Pat. "Bob Heironimus is scared. Why does one contact an attorney but for matters involving the law?"

On December 27, 1998, I called Heironimus again and asked for another interview. Sure enough, he referred me to his attorney, Barry Woodard of Zillah, a little community east of Yakima. "I have a photograph showing you with Patterson on the South Fork," I told Heironimus. He said nothing. Two days later I called Woodard. I was surprised at the lawyer's tone: mild, informal, laid back. I stressed that I was searching for the truth about Patterson's film. I said Heironimus seemed like a nice man, and I wasn't bent on hurting his reputation.

"Bob is a real salt of the earth guy," Woodard said, quick to reinforce my assessment of his client. He said that Heironimus had only recently contacted him, and so far he didn't have much information regarding Heironimus's case. He needed to get to the bottom of it. He said that, according to Heironimus, there were "other players involved," and some were "prominent people" in the community. Heironimus was concerned about what would happen if their "participation" was divulged. "There is so much more to the situation," Woodard said promising to get back to me in a week.

I hung up. *Other players involved. Prominent people.* This was an amazing admission. Who were these "prominent people"? Of course, prominent people usually have money. I immediately thought of Al DeAtley. But I had no evidence of DeAtley's involvement in a hoax. I felt that Woodard wasn't laying a smoke screen regarding his statements about prominent people. It was too early in the game; he was now only establishing a relationship with his client. He seemed to have let slip, truthfully, a key fact in the Patterson story. No, it seemed Bob Heironimus had told his attorney the truth; that he was scared, and that he needed legal advice, especially since a writer was digging into the Roger Patterson story, and—apparently—into him.

After hearing nothing from Woodard for more than a week, I called him on January 7, 1999. Woodard said that he had yet to meet with Heironimus because his client's birthday had interrupted their appointment. As we waited on Woodard, Pat and I took time to drive to the state of Washington criminal archives in Ellensburg where we spent hours and hours searching for case files related to the names we had compiled so far. Traveling to the municipal and county courts in Yakima, we requested copies of any lawsuits to help construct a picture of Patterson. And we started visiting the University of Washington in Seattle to search through back issues of the Yakima papers. I spent hours reading legal documents. If Patterson's Bigfoot film was phony, and Heironimus refused to talk, then perhaps Gimlin was part of the hoax. If I couldn't get an interview with Gimlin, then I could at least collect every bit of information on him to ascertain the truth about *him*.

After I put the pieces together, a very interesting picture emerged.

10

BOB GIMLIN

By now it should be clear that even the most famous and widely believed Bigfoot stories are rarely checked out for detail, including relevant events and circumstances preceding and following the alleged incidents.

—**Kenneth Wylie, author of**
Bigfoot: A Personal Inquiry into a Phenomenon[1]

To create an accurate portrait of the mysterious Bob Gimlin, Roger Patterson's partner, and the only man on earth to witness the filming of a real, live Bigfoot, I piled in a heap every book and scrap of paper that talked about Gimlin, even in the most seemingly inconsequential manner. Then I microwaved a cup of water, tossed in a tea bag, and sat down in the study to begin the tedious task of assembling and cross-correlating the data. The results were hardly revealing.

First there was Gimlin, the man. Browning photos of him showed a handsome young man with smooth, black hair and a square jaw, kneeling and holding Bigfoot casts. Thumbing through the dog-eared pages, I read that writer Kenneth Wylie was one of a few men lucky enough to interview the enigmatic Gimlin face-to-face. In 1980 he wrote in *Bigfoot: A Personal Inquiry into a Phenomenon*: "Gimlin is a smallish man, but strong and wiry. His regular, rather handsome features are tanned and lined, as one might expect in an avid outdoorsman and an expert horseman partly of Indian descent. His manner is quiet and polite; his voice can be calming in its understated tenor."[2]

Famed Bigfooter Peter Byrne discovered that Gimlin was supposedly a horse breeder and cattleman.[3] Danny Perez, a Bigfooter from Norwalk, California, wrote in *BigfooTimes*, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Patterson's film, that Gimlin was born on October 18, 1931.[4] That would make Gimlin sixty-seven years old in 1998 when I started my investigation.

Frowning, I slurped my tea. That was the full extent of any descriptions of Bob Gimlin.

Bob Gimlin (*left*) and Roger Patterson posed for news photographers within days of their alleged sighting and Patterson's filming of a Bigfoot at Bluff Creek, California. The two men hold casts of alleged Bigfoot tracks left at the film site.

Byrne's book claimed that Gimlin became interested in Bigfoot when Gimlin met Patterson in 1963. In the transcript of a rare 1992 video interview of Gimlin by Canadian Bigfooter John Green, Gimlin said he met Patterson between 1955 and 1959. That would have been about the time Patterson came home from the Army and joined the rodeo circuit. "I can't recall just exactly when he did start talking to me about Bigfoot," Gimlin said. "But it was probably in the early 1960s."[5]

It seemed that Gimlin, nice, likable, quiet, even passive, had apparently come under Patterson's spell. I flipped through *Bigfoot*, written by John Napier, a leading anthropologist of his time who took an interest in Patterson's footage. Napier wrote that Gimlin was "somewhat of a 'third man' character in this affair."[6] This "third man" label seemed apt, for what with the allegation that Bob Heironimus wore the Bigfoot suit, it suggested that Patterson pulled off the hoax with three people. Who would make a better witness to the Bigfoot filming than someone like Gimlin? A nice, mild-mannered guy, Gimlin let Patterson take the limelight. At the same time, Gimlin, as a corroborating witness, gave Patterson the support he needed to make the film credible. Supposedly, Napier reported, the Patterson film affair eventually embittered Gimlin. Perhaps Gimlin had served a purpose, and then been discarded.

I drank from my cup. Pat walked in and sat down at her computer. "I'm going to log on and talk to my nephew," she said.

"Fine."

As her modem squawked, I opened another book to a page dangling by a thread from the binding. I read that in 1975, three years after Patterson died and the famous footage had fairly successfully penetrated the American consciousness through television and multiple theater showings, film producer Robert Guenette, who was making a documentary for Schick Sun Classic Pictures, Inc., explored Gimlin's bitterness:

> Gimlin's reputation is that of a mild, honest man. I have talked to him, several times. He still lives nearby Yakima with his wife, Judy. He has a somewhat embittered attitude about the whole matter; he is angry at the insinuations that he either compromised his honesty to perpetrate a hoax, or indeed was the prime dupe of one. He has repeatedly said that "there is no question about what was out there . . ." describing the creature and explaining the incident over and over again in detail.
>
> In all his pronouncements, he has not changed his story. He believes he saw a Bigfoot that October 20th at Bluff Creek. I am only one among many who offered Gimlin large amounts of money to "tell the truth" about what "really" happened that day. His answer to me was, "I'm already telling the truth."
>
> His wife, Judy, told me that she suffered rather than gained, from the whole experience. She was working at a bank at the time; she became the butt of many jokes and found herself ridiculed by even her closest friends. She says she urged her husband to quit looking for Bigfoot, to withdraw from the field. In a large

> way, Bob Gimlin has, existing now only on the perimeters of it, kept there by the fact of his presence that day in 1967 when Patterson shot the film and by the other Bigfoot hunters, all of whom use his name freely, calling him an associate, even if he isn't. He is, in fact, the foremost living Bigfoot investigator, even if he is now inactive, even if he was only a passive partner of Patterson's. Everyone awaits the day when he will re-enter the field.[7]

Guenette's account fit the accepted party line I had unearthed in my searches—promoted by the aging Bigfooters Byrne, Dahinden, and Green—that Gimlin remained private, isolated, and embittered because people doubted his story.

I slid down in my chair and intently studied the transcription of the Gimlin interview. Gimlin revealed much, for, as Gimlin told it, the millionaire Al DeAtley mistreated him. It was Gimlin who provided his own one-ton truck to transport two saddle horses and a pack horse down to Bluff Creek: "Al DeAtley was Roger Patterson's brother-in-law, and he backed Roger financially with whatever expenses it took Roger to go to these places. He was supposed to help me on some of the expenses, which I never did receive."

Besides the truck, Gimlin provided his own horse and his own food. "The agreement when we left on any of those investigations was that whatever Roger spent that we would split the expenses with me, but Al DeAtley was backing Roger, because Roger didn't have a job at the particular time." Green asked, "So in fact he only financed Roger, he didn't finance your share at all?" Gimlin then told Green, "No, he didn't finance my part of the trip at all. I had my own horse, my own equipment, and my own food. I didn't expect somebody else to support me on that. It would have been nice if I could have gotten part of the fuel paid and expenses on the truck."

Later in the interview, Gimlin said, "Roger and Al had big dollar signs in their eyes, you know." And Patterson and DeAtley went about promoting the Bluff Creek footage without him. "They were just going to go here and go there. . . . There was a lot of money spent." He told Green:

> That was about the time I went back to work because I didn't have any income. They just kind of cut me completely out of the thing. It took me forever to kind of even . . . well, even after Roger died, I had to go to court to get any rights at all out of it which . . . you know was kind of an odd thing. But between Mrs. Patterson's attorney and her it was a deal where they did not recognize that I had any interest at all in the film. At one time I was supposed to be one-third partner on everything that happened. If there was money coming in, but then that all changed.[8]

And so Gimlin—like Jerry Merritt—had been screwed, to use the popular parlance. Gimlin had been the world's second person, and only other eyewitness, to see a Bigfoot captured on film. Up to that fateful day he had considered himself as one of three business partners hunting for Bigfoot; soon after he was dumped.

I swallowed a mouthful of lukewarm tea. My eyes alighted on a page I had bookmarked in Green's book, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*, published in 1978. Green wrote that DeAtley "had put up the money for Bob and Roger to make the trip and had a one-third interest in the results."[9] The other two thirds would be split evenly between Patterson and Gimlin. Gimlin *was* right: he *did* have a one-third interest, and felt he rightfully deserved a third of the profits. But he'd gotten nothing.

Gimlin told Green in the video interview: "Of course, Roger made some deal with American National which I never did know. . . ." (American National Enterprises, a Salt Lake City film company, had bought rights to Patterson's footage.) "I never was allowed to know the exact depth of it or what exactly happened there."[10]

I leaned back and thought for awhile. Bob Gimlin: a business partner, used, then discarded by Patterson and DeAtley. *That*, I concluded, was why Gimlin was bitter, not because he felt that people doubted that he saw Bigfoot. I drained the tea cup.

As the hypnotic clicking of Pat's keyboard filled the study, I continued to review the scanty Bigfoot literature. Jumping back and forth among the different accounts, I began to suspect that the old-line Bigfooters had taken the fact of Gimlin's bitterness and used it to "prove" that Patterson was *honest*, that Roger simply *couldn't* have faked the footage. They argued that if Patterson had faked it, then Gimlin, cut out of the profits, would have exposed Patterson's hoax in revenge. But Gimlin never did expose Patterson, and he hasn't to this day. Ipso facto, when it came to the film, Patterson was honest.

Returning to Green's book, my eyes fell on these words: "As a result of one disagreement, Bob Gimlin was cut out for several years from any participation in the profits, and it is worth reflecting on whether Roger would have dared to let that situation develop if the film were fake."[11]

Green continued to state this idea as recently as 1992 in Bigfooter Perez's *BigfooTimes*: "What impressed me was that Gimlin and Patterson had a deep falling out over the handling of the pictures. Gimlin felt that Patterson had done him out of his share. I didn't think that Patterson would have dared to put Gimlin in that position had Gimlin knew that the film was a fake. If both knew it to be a fake, I cannot see Patterson being able to afford to let Gimlin loose."[12]

I mulled over these statements. No, I finally concluded, Green's logic was flawed. If Gimlin had come forward, he would have lost any chance for profit-sharing, for three reasons. First, his revelation would have stopped all future profit-making and frozen current profits as nosy journalists began exposing the hoax. Second, Gimlin might have opened himself up to civil and criminal indictments. Third, there was DeAtley. If DeAtley were involved in a hoax with Patterson and Gimlin knew it, would Gimlin rush to reveal the full extent of the hoax to the world and risk DeAtley's wrath? It was common knowledge in 1967 that DeAtley was a wealthy and, because of his money, very powerful man. I had not yet interviewed DeAtley—but now I vowed that I would, for no other Bigfoot hunter had apparently done so.

I went to the kitchen and returned to the study with another cup of tea. I asked Pat, "How's everyone in Albany?"

"They're doing fine," she said, peering at the message in its blue box.

"Good."

I sat down and pondered the issue of Gimlin's reticence to attack Patterson. It was a fair assumption, I believed at this stage of my investigation, that Gimlin, a common horse breeder, would find it financially impossible to successfully sue a businessman who owned a concrete company. Why would Gimlin run to the media and risk a suit for defamation of character and slander? Why would Gimlin, in the late 1960s, want to lose what little that he had? He was often unemployed, as he told Green, and moved from job to job. Also, in the mid-1970s, after Patterson died, Gimlin was embroiled in a costly lawsuit against Patty Patterson when he attempted to secure his one-third right to the Bigfoot footage. Why throw away more money in a losing cause?

No, Green's logic was based on Green's own belief of how a conspirator in a hoax would act, and not on Gimlin's personal situation—a poor man living in a small community where one of its prominent members was not only a benefactor of Roger Patterson, but rich. As I analyzed Green's logic, I also found myself completely disagreeing with Dahinden's statements in his book *Sasquatch*: "And what about Bob Gimlin? He has nothing to gain today by perpetuating a lie, and nothing to lose by exposing one."[13] No, Mr. Dahinden, I thought, on the contrary, Bob Gimlin *did* have everything to lose by exposing the hoax if DeAtley was involved: He would lose the little money he had as well as his reputation.

The more I studied the sparse information on Gimlin, the more questions multiplied concerning Gimlin's honesty, and Patterson's and DeAtley's role in Patterson's quest. There were too many discrepancies, contradictions, and oddities in Patterson's and Gimlin's testimony and behavior. The first problem was Patterson's actions on the morning of October 20, 1967, at Bluff Creek. I drew the tip of my yellow highlighter across several lines in Green's interview transcript:

> The day we got the film footage [said Gimlin], I left early in the morning and Roger slept in. I just rode out and around. I always got up early and so I rode on out. My horse loosened a shoe and I came back in to tack the shoe on tighter. About 10:00, mid morning or so, I sat around there for a little while, because Roger was gone when I got back. Supposedly he had gone down the creek there . . . ah, Bluff Creek there, and after awhile he came back and asked what area I had covered that morning? I told him, and he says why don't we ride up into this area we had ridden into before, a desolate type area down a couple of canyons, there's a creek running through it.[14]

This "desolate type area" would turn out to be the site of the filming. I wondered, Where had Patterson gone while Gimlin was out riding? Gimlin told Patterson where he had ridden; but Gimlin had never told anyone, to my knowledge, where Patterson had gone. Could Patterson have ridden down to Bluff Creek to meet a fellow conspirator, such as Bob Heironimus, to wrap up the final details of the hoax?

Pat logged off the computer and massaged my shoulders for a few moments. She left the room, and I returned to the worn books in front of me.

The second reason for questioning Patterson's and Gimlin's honesty was this: Despite the claims of the old Bigfooters, it wasn't clear what hour and minute on October 20, 1967, the Bigfoot footage was shot, or even if it were shot on that day. Green said it was "early in the afternoon."[15] Gimlin told Green, "It was about mid-day, perhaps a little bit after noon time."[16] In my yellowing copy of *Argosy* magazine published February 1968, botanist Ivan T. Sanderson stated that the filming occurred at 3:30 P.M.[17] The first story ever published on Patterson's sighting, in the Humboldt *Times Standard* in Eureka, reported that the filming occurred at 1:30 P.M.[18] Well, was it a little after noon time, 1:30, or 3:30? It would be worth talking to Gimlin to sort out the confusion.

The third discrepancy in the film story was worth closer attention. Patterson had told the unidentified *Times Standard* reporter, apparently on the evening of October 20: "My horse reared and fell, completely flattening a stirrup with my foot caught in it."[19] Patterson went on to say that Gimlin's horse "reared and had to be released."[20] But the *Argosy* article differed: "The horses reared suddenly in alarm and threw both the riders."[21] When Green asked Gimlin in his interview if Patterson's horse bucked, Gimlin answered, "No, it never did buck, just reared and jumped all around. His horse was in front of me and, of course, I wasn't looking straight at him all the time. This all happened in a couple of heart beats you know. It happened fast!"[22] I drew bold yellow lines across the pertinent text:

Green: But then Roger's horse didn't go down?
Gimlin: No. It didn't fall down, just reared up is all.
Green: Because this has been said since [inaudible] . . . you know that Roger's horse fell down . . .
Gimlin: No, no his horse never did fall down. No.
Green: Okay, that's interesting.[23]

Interesting, too, was Gimlin's statement regarding his own horse. Patterson had told the *Times Standard* that Gimlin's horse had "reared." But Gimlin told Green that after the encounter with the Bigfoot, "We went to catch his [Patterson's] horse and the pack horse because I kept my horse under control. I had my horse with me all the time."[24]

So, which was it? Did one horse rear or buck, or two, or none at all? Did one horse fall? two? none? If Patterson said his horse fell, and Gimlin denies it, then perhaps Patterson lied. Another reason, I thought, to interview Gimlin.

As I continued to compare statements in the published accounts, I identified a fourth problem with Gimlin's and Patterson's stories, this one regarding the reported size and weight of the Bigfoot. Patterson told the *Times Standard* that the creature reached a height of about 6'6" to 7' and weighed between 350 and 400 pounds. But, a few years after the sighting, when Byrne interviewed Gimlin and Patterson, according to Patterson the Bigfoot was now 7'4" (a remarkably precise measurement) and 800 pounds. Iterestingly, the Bigfoot had grown *four inches and 400 pounds* in only a few years! Gimlin was more modest: the creature was 6'1" or 6'2" and weighed 450 pounds.[25] But Gimlin later told Green: "I thought it was about six and a half feet tall and I would have guessed its weight at 250 to 300 pounds."[26] The Bigfoot had grown four inches but lost 200 pounds! What was it? A little over six feet tall, or nearly seven and a half feet?

As I culled through the mass of paper, another troublesome problem emerged. This time it was the torrential rain that fell near dawn on October 21, 1967, the day after the filming. Supposedly, Patterson and Gimlin took castings of several of the creature's tracks. Later that night they returned to camp. Gimlin told Green: "Around 5:30 A.M. or so, it started raining, and it was just a-pouring down rain."[27] So Gimlin grabbed some cardboard boxes from his truck to take to the scene to protect the tracks. But the boxes were soggy. Instead:

> I disregarded taking those back up there. I rode back up to the scene, pulled some bark off some trees and covered up the tracks as best I could and went back to camp. By then we decided it wasn't going to quit raining. The little creek that was six or seven feet across was now ten or twelve feet across and four feet deep! We were on the side of the creek which had to be crossed with the truck to get out to the main road.[28]

I opened Wylie's book. The storm was so intense, Gimlin told Wylie, that at the bottom of the gorge Bluff Creek had already risen to a "raging river."[29] It was a terrific struggle to extract the truck from the wilderness, and mud slides nearly destroyed it. Alert, I sat up and read on. Despite the storm, nine to ten days later Bob Titmus, the Bigfoot hunter living in Anderson, California, who was involved in the first widely publicized track find at Bluff Creek in 1958, went to the film site and later wrote to Green that he found the tracks. Covered with pieces of bark, they had somehow survived the storm. Wylie commented, "How any Bigfoot tracks, whether covered by cardboard or bark, could survive such a storm is not explained. Did the overflowing creek somehow not wash the tracks away, leaving them in 'good condition,' for Titmus to find them nine or 10 days later?"[30]

Also, how did Gimlin, in the darkness and the tremendous rain, manage to get to the sighting locale *fast enough* to cover the tracks before they were destroyed? What exactly was the weather like at Bluff Creek in October? In the transcript of the Gimlin interview, Gimlin said he and Patterson had traveled to the Bluff Creek area in the first place to look for recently reported Bigfoot tracks.

Before they arrived, "It had . . . started raining all up and down the West coast. By the time we got down there, these tracks supposedly were three different sizes and were just globs in the mud as far as I was concerned. We couldn't get any plaster cast definition of them at all."[31]

My temples began throbbing. Massaging them with my thumbs, I thought, The rain storm was the fifth discrepancy that troubled me enough to want to question Gimlin.

And the sixth, but not necessarily final, discrepancy was the most disturbing. I re-read the pertinent passages spread out on the desk in front of me. The discrepancy had to do with the handling and processing of the precious film footage. Patterson told the *Times Standard* that "He had been to Eureka in the afternoon to airmail his film partner Al DeAtley in Yakima."[32] I surmised that DeAtley took the film some place to be processed in time to be shown in his house on October 22, the second day after the sighting.

In his book, Byrne constructed the likely route Patterson and Gimlin took in mailing the film: "They drove out via the Bluff Creek store on the main Hoopa Road to Orleans Road, then through Weitchpec, Hoopa, Willow Creek, and Arcata to Eureka. . . . . From Eureka, according to Patterson, they mailed the film by registered airmail to Yakima, Washington."[33] From Yakima, supposedly DeAtley took the film to Seattle to be processed. Wylie took note of Gimlin's memory of the mailing: "Gimlin is careful to add that he does not himself remember the name of the place from which they sent the film but only that he is repeating what Patterson had said on several occasions."[34]

I shook my head in disbelief. Why couldn't Gimlin remember this most important detail, where the film was mailed from, especially since he was supposedly with Patterson all day? It seemed to me virtually impossible that Gimlin, in an excited state on the afternoon of October 20, would forget this vital detail. Why did Gimlin tell Wylie that he was merely repeating what Patterson told him? Could Patterson have left Gimlin's side for a period of time and done something with the film? If so, then perhaps Patterson *never mailed the film at all*. And if that was the case, Patterson was lying.

My stomach knotted up in anger. I picked up the Green transcript. Gimlin retained his ignorance on this matter of the mailing even up to 1992: "Then we went on over to . . . [reflecting] . . . oh, whatever town that was to mail the film up to Al DeAtley, Roger's brother-in-law, so he could take it and get it developed to see if there was really anything on the film."[35]

To me, Wylie had it right: "It certainly seems unusual that two such clever and worldly men would allow such an extraordinary piece of undeveloped film to be sent unescorted by air to a brother-in-law in Yakima, who subsequently is supposed to have taken it to Seattle for processing."[36] Exactly, I agreed. Why didn't the two men take the film to a nearby town for processing, or take the extra time to process it later, so that they could study it at their leisure? "One would assume," Wylie wrote, "that at least one of the pair would have kept the precious film closely guarded and been present when it was developed, if for no other reason than to avoid charges of tampering or fabrication."[37]

I remembered Ivan Sanderson's statement in *Argosy* that Patterson and Gimlin processed the film under guard, had a copy made, and locked up the original in a vault.[38] This story completely contradicted the conventional story promoted by the old-line Bigfooters who maintained that DeAtley processed the film. Yet no record existed of where and when the film was processed. This, too, was a discrepancy I wanted desperately to clear up with Gimlin.

Over the next several days, while I pondered the many discrepancies and waited to hear from Heironimus's lawyer, I monitored the Bigfoot lists on the Web. One day I stumbled across an e-mail bitterly lambasting a BBC documentary called *X Creatures* that had recently aired in Great Britain. The documentary attacked the veracity of Patterson's film. I asked Larry Lund, who had given me a copy of the photo of the six cowboys on horseback, to send me the documentary. Soon, it arrived in the mail, and I eagerly popped it into my VCR.

Chris Packham, the producer, managed to interview Gimlin by phone. He asked, "Do you still think what you saw was an animal?" Gimlin responded, "I've thought about this many, many times over the years. At one time in my life, right shortly after the film footage, I was *totally* convinced no one could fool me. And of course I'm an older man now, and I see a lot of things, and I think there could have been a possibility. But it would have to have been really well planned by Roger."[39]

Ah, a ray of light had shone through a chink in Gimlin's protective wall. He had broken his silence, loosening his grip on his insistent belief that the Bluff Creek Bigfoot had to be real. If he believed these many years in Patterson's honesty, why was he *now* admitting that "there could have been a possibility" of a hoax?

I absolutely had to interview Gimlin. Ever since October 20, 1967, he had consistently portrayed an image of honesty and conviction regarding Patterson's film. Simultaneously, he also tried to maintain a tone of disengagement, as if he didn't want to be seen or remembered as the "third man."

Wylie was perceptive about Gimlin's disinterested attitude. He wrote that Gimlin "is really not that serious about the whole matter [of the filming]."[40] Also, Perez reported that when Gimlin returned to Yakima after his mind-boggling experience, rather than joining Patterson, DeAtley, Green, and Dahinden to view the astonishing footage, he went straight home. According to Perez, Gimlin was "completely exhausted from the trip back home and the soaking experience getting his truck out of the Bluff Creek area."[41] He must have been tired, certainly, but just having allegedly witnessed a Bigfoot, wouldn't he *want to see* what Patterson had recorded?

I felt that Gimlin owed the public a long, face-to-face interview to resolve the many published discrepancies. If he could explain how the original facts of his and Patterson's sighting had been distorted by others; if he could explain his lapse of memory regarding the shipping of the film; if he would go over his story yet again, bit by bit, and sort out sequences of events and clear up doubts, then perhaps Gimlin might remove the belief taking firm root in my mind that Roger Patterson was a liar and a hoaxer.

I returned to Wylie's book and read again a passage that had caught my eye earlier. His conclusion regarding the Patterson footage was sensible:

> By now it should be clear that even the most famous and widely believed Bigfoot stories are rarely checked out for detail, including relevant events and circumstances preceding and following the alleged incidents. A thorough investigation, including interviews of all the people involved, determining where they were and when, the important dates, times, and the sequence of events, the name of the camera shop that developed the film, would almost certainly reveal further interesting problems with the above case. And whether or not we ever learn the whole truth, it is safe to assume that few unbiased observers would wish to take the time to follow up every lead. There is simply too much about the whole episode that smells suspiciously of skunk.[42]

I shared Wylie's sentiments. And I couldn't help but agree with his assessment of Gimlin: "If he is a willing participant in a hoax, he has been brilliantly cast. If he is an unwilling participant, he is the perfect foil. If everything he says is exactly as he says it is, he is almost too good to be true."[43]

I now turned my attention to criminal files Pat and I had found in the Criminal Archives in Ellensburg.

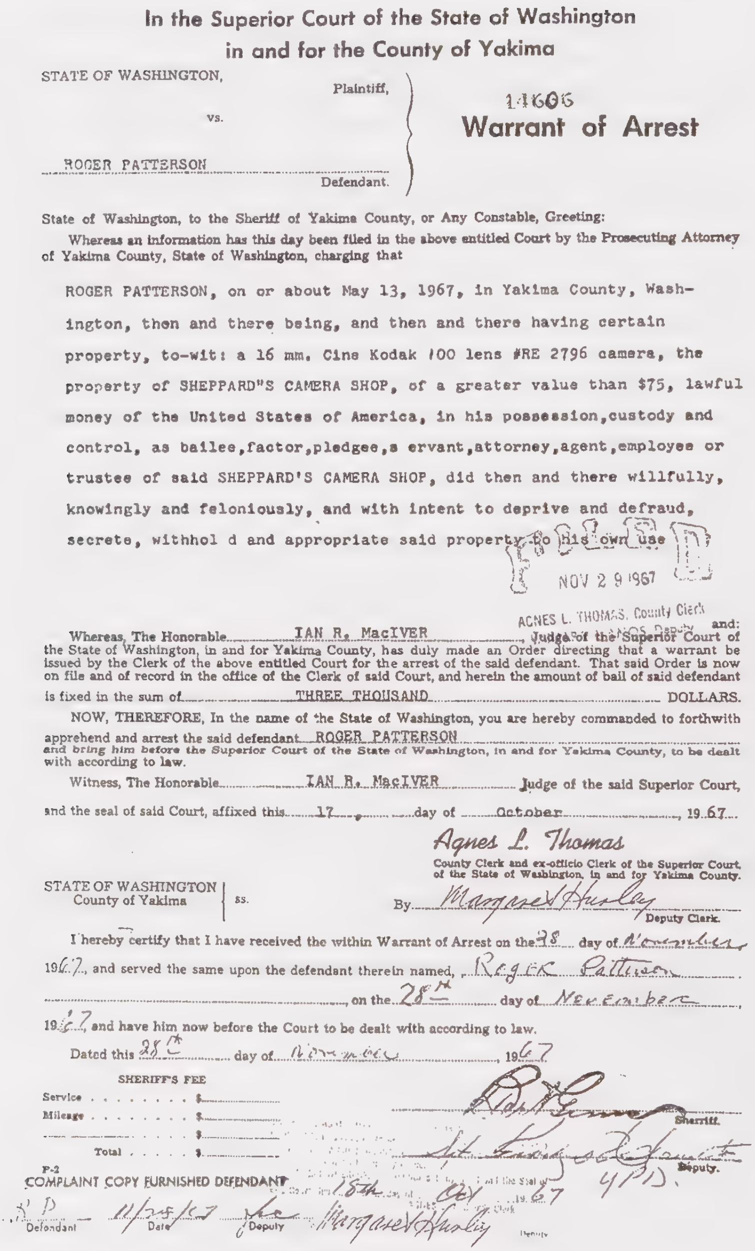
The first one was a shocker. On October 17, 1967, three days before Patterson allegedly shot his Bigfoot film, the Superior Court of Yakima County ordered his arrest for grand larceny. The warrant of arrest reads:

> ROGER PATTERSON, on or about May 13, 1967, in Yakima County, Washington, then and there being, and then and there having certain property, to-wit: a 16 mm. Cine Kodak W00 lens #RE 2796 camera, the property of SHEPPARD'S CAMERA SHOP, of a greater value than $75, lawful money of the United States of America, in his possession, custody and control, as bailee, factor, pledgee, servant, attorney, agent, employee or trustee of said SHEPPARD'S CAMERA SHOP, did then and there willfully, knowingly and feloniously, and with intent to deprive and defraud, secrete, withhold and appropriate said property to his own use.[44]

Bail for Patterson was set at $3,000.

It took the sheriff's office more than a month to serve the warrant, on November 28, 1967. Patterson was always out of town, either in Seattle, Canada, or New York City, as newspaper stories and the *Argosy* magazine article showed. When finally arrested, Patterson pleaded not guilty before Judge Ian R. MacIver on November 29, 1967. Yakima County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Bruce Schultheis successfully pleaded that Patterson be released upon his own recognizance.

More than two years passed. On December 8, 1969, Deputy Prosecuting



In the Superior Court of the State of Washington in and for the County of Yakima

STATE OF WASHINGTON, Plaintiff,

vs.

ROGER PATTERSON Defendant.

14606

Warrant of Arrest

State of Washington, to the Sheriff of Yakima County, or Any Constable, Greeting:

Whereas an information has this day been filed in the above entitled Court by the Prosecuting Attorney of Yakima County, State of Washington, charging that

ROGER PATTERSON, on or about May 13, 1967, in Yakima County, Washington, then and there being, and then and there having certain property, to-wit: a 16 mm. Cine Kodak 100 lens #RE 2796 camera, the property of SHEPPARD"S CAMERA SHOP, of a greater value than $75, lawful money of the United States of America, in his possession,custody and control, as bailee,factor,pledgee,s ervant,attorney,agent,employee or trustee of said SHEPPARD'S CAMERA SHOP, did then and there willfully, knowingly and feloniously, and with intent to deprive and defraud, secrete, withhol d and appropriate said property to his own use

FILED
NOV 29 1967
AGNES L. THOMAS, County Clerk

Whereas, The Honorable IAN R. MacIVER, Judge of the Superior Court of the State of Washington, in and for Yakima County, has duly made an Order directing that a warrant be issued by the Clerk of the above entitled Court for the arrest of the said defendant. That said Order is now on file and of record in the office of the Clerk of said Court, and herein the amount of bail of said defendant is fixed in the sum of THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

NOW, THEREFORE, In the name of the State of Washington, you are hereby commanded to forthwith apprehend and arrest the said defendant ROGER PATTERSON and bring him before the Superior Court of the State of Washington, in and for Yakima County, to be dealt with according to law.

Witness, The Honorable IAN R. MacIVER Judge of the said Superior Court, and the seal of said Court, affixed this 17 day of October, 19 67

Agnes L. Thomas
County Clerk and ex-officio Clerk of the Superior Court, of the State of Washington, in and for Yakima County.

By Margaret Hurley
Deputy Clerk.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
County of Yakima } ss.

I hereby certify that I have received the within Warrant of Arrest on the 28 day of November 1967, and served the same upon the defendant therein named, Roger Patterson on the 28th day of November 1967, and have him now before the Court to be dealt with according to law.

Dated this 28th day of November, 1967

SHERIFF'S FEE

Service . . . . $
Mileage . . . . $
. . . . . . $
Total . . . . . . $

Sheriff.

Sgt. [illegible]
YPD.
Deputy.

P-2
COMPLAINT COPY FURNISHED DEFENDANT

18th Oct 1967

R P — 11/28/67
Defendant Date Deputy

Margaret Hurley
Deputy

Warrant of Arrest on Roger Patterson for grand larceny, executed October 17, 1967. Source: Washington State Archives, Ellensburg, Washington.

Attorney Jon R. Harlan for Yakima County moved the court to dismiss the case. "This motion is based upon the files and records herein and the attached affidavit," Harlan said. Harlan said that the evidence obtained would not justify a trial. Judge Walter A. Stauffacher agreed and dismissed the case.[45]

Studying the case file, I wondered what the "files and records herein" that Harlan referred to were. The only records in the case file were court documents related to the crime: order for warrant, warrant of arrest, order of arraignment, plea of not guilty, and order releasing defendant on own recognizance. Did the court decide to dismiss the case for lack of interest in pursuing Patterson? Or was there something more? Had the "files and records" been lost or misfiled—or had they never even existed?

I opened the second case file stored in its folder. The subject was a Robert E. Gimlin. On February 20, 1962, a warrant was issued for his arrest:

> ROBERT E. GIMLIN, ELLSWORTH WRIGHT and HOWARD GOODELL, on or about between December 23, 1961, and December 27, 1961, in Yakima County, Washington, each then and there being, did each then and there knowingly, willfully and feloniously, and with intent to deprive the owner thereof, take, steal and carry away personal property of another, to-wit: plywood, of a

SHEPPARD'S CAMERA
Karisma

Sheppard's Camera Shop, Yakima, Washington, where Roger Patterson rented a sixteen-millimeter movie camera to film his "Bigfoot." Patterson was arrested for stealing the camera. Photo by Greg Long.

> value greater than $75, lawful money of the United States of America, the property of Arthur Koch.[46]

Gimlin's bail was set at $3,000. On June 11, 1962, Gimlin's lawyer asked for a separate trial for Gimlin, and Gimlin and ten others were subpoenaed in the trial of Goodell. On October 4, 1962, Gimlin filed a plea of guilty. On March 5, 1963, Gimlin filed a motion to withdraw his plea of guilty. His lawyer, Charles Lyon, argued that Gimlin told the police that he had the plywood in his possession, but that he didn't know it was stolen until the officers told him. On March 7, 1963, Lincoln E. Shropshire, prosecutor of Yakima County, moved to dismiss the action against Gimlin, and the charge of receiving stolen property was dismissed.

I closed the folder and stood up and stretched. My study of Gimlin was complete, at least the published record. Yes, I thought, Gimlin was too good to be true. He had witnessed the filming of Bigfoot, the greatest piece of "evidence" for Bigfoot reality the world had ever known. And now, more than three decades later, he was quietly going about his business refusing, just like Bob Heironimus, to be interviewed.

I found Pat in the kitchen preparing a roast for the oven. I filled her in on my findings. "Gimlin is the only person who can explain his bitterness," I said. "Only he can prove his truthfulness when it comes to the film."

"I agree." She sprinkled salt on the bottom of the pan.

"Gimlin and Heironimus shut us out." I felt my ire rising. "Gimlin is the one, last, living link to the question of Patterson's honesty. Let's go back to Yakima and see what we can find."

I slid the roast into the oven and Pat closed the oven door.

"Who should we see?" she asked.

"Let's poke around in the Yakima library. While we're there, let's re-interview Jerry Beck."

A few days later we were back in Beck's house. Her attitude had changed. This time she didn't fold her arms or purse her lips. She sat comfortably, arms open, and actually smiled. It was as if she had, since our last visit, gotten something off her chest.

I didn't waste any time. I informed her that some people whom I had recently interviewed were being evasive and deflecting my questions. "I hope you're not insinuating that I'm that way!" she said in a cheerful voice.

"People are protecting Roger Patterson," I said curtly.

"As far as I know," she drawled, smiling, "there would be no reason to protect him."

"Last time I was here, you said you didn't know about Jerry Merritt's western town," I said, challenging her. I knew from Merritt's home page that Prentis Beck had contributed to Merritt's hit song "Buffalo Grass." Prentis would've probably visited Merritt's house to cut the record.

"Ever hear of a song called 'Buffalo Grass'?" I asked.

"Yes. Jerry Merritt must have sung it."

"How many buildings were at the western town?" I suddenly asked.

She said loudly, irritated, "I didn't know how many buildings were up there, myself! I been up there *lots* of times," she suddenly blurted out, "time and time again! But I wasn't interested in it."

"So you were up there a lot?" I said, amazed.

"I've been up there lots of times. I remember seeing it. I walked around down there. I didn't walk into any of the buildings. There wasn't anything to it as far as *I'm* concerned!"

I didn't let up and asked her more questions. She finally admitted that she had visited Merritt's western recording studio. Ah, I was finally getting some place.

"Prentis didn't write 'Buffalo Grass,'" she said. "We put in some money to help produce it. Jerry needed some help at the time. We got a percentage of what sold. I knew Jerry Merritt very well. Prentis liked Jerry. We visited Jerry, and the Merritts visited us." She said that Prentis helped Merritt get started in the publishing business, but Prentis got little financial return.

"Did you know Bob Heironimus?"

"I don't know anything about Bob much. I've known his name ever since the kids were in high school. He went to high school with my daughter. Other than that, I don't know much about him. He worked one season for my husband."

"Ever hear of a guy running around in a suit pretending he was Bigfoot?"

"I don't know for a fact, but. . . ." She hesitated. "I—I've heard some—I've heard somebody talking—I don't even remember who it was now—different people talking about. . . ." She trailed off.

"You remember people talking about somebody in a suit?"

She laughed nervously and loudly. "Yeah, a hairy kind of a suit anyway. People were talking about it." Such talk was prevalent just after October 20, she said.

What about Patterson's homemade documentary he was shooting near the South Fork? In my first interview, she had been indifferent about it.

"It was common knowledge that Roger was trying to make a movie," she said this time.

"He was trying to film a Bigfoot," I said.

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes!" she said enthusiastically. "I heard that Roger said he wanted to film a Bigfoot. He had a camera with him when he went hunting—just in case, you know. He would have been *just thrilled*."

I asked her if she thought Patterson was trying to pull off a hoax.

"I thought that was kind of ridiculous," she replied. "He wasn't—" She paused. "—wasn't trying to pull a hoax like that. It was just—I just couldn't believe it."

"You couldn't believe it?"

"No human is big enough to be as big as what they're claiming that critter was."

But, I said silently to myself, Gimlin's original estimate was a few inches over six feet, well within normal human limits.

I turned back to Jerry Beck's husband and asked her to tell me what he had said about the sighting.

Before Prentis died, she said, he didn't believe in the reality of Bigfoot as much as in his younger years. No one had caught one or had any real evidence. But Prentis remained a close friend of Patterson up to Patterson's death. With Patterson gone, interest in Bigfoot died in the Ahtanum Valley.

Jerry Beck had proved one thing, I thought as Pat and I headed back home. Even though she claimed in this second interview that there was nothing to protect, her openness contrasted starkly with the first interview. Gone were the memory lapses, lulls, hesitations, and the stutterings. Instead of concealment, she projected openness. Perhaps I was beginning to weaken the wall that had protected the truth of Roger Patterson for more than thirty years. The structure of that wall had been fashioned and erected by the Bigfoot field itself.

When we got home, I decided to probe the Patterson story from another angle, to bore into the wall from underneath, at the very joints of the foundation where belief in Patterson's footage originated. I started phoning the old Bigfooters.

NOTES

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4. Danny Perez, *BigfooTimes* (Norwalk, CA: Center for Big Foot Studies, October 20, 1992), p. 2.

5. Bobbie Short, Transcript, "John Green's Interview with Bob Gimlin 1992," http://www.n2.net/prey/bigfoot/interviews/john.htm [February 1999]. See also *Bigfoot Encounters*, http://www.bigfootencounters.com [spring 2002].

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29. Wylie, *Bigfoot: A Personal Inquiry,* p. 187.
30. Ibid.
31. Short, "John Green's Interview with Bob Gimlin 1992."
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34. Wylie, *Bigfoot*, p. 185.
35. Short, "John Green's Interview with Bob Gimlin 1992."
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11

THE BIGFOOT HUNTERS

You could be Adolf Hitler and film a Bigfoot.

—**Larry Lund, Bigfoot publicist**

He [Roger Patterson] came across as a used-car salesman type of personality. He was kind of a pitchman.

—**John Green, Bigfooter**

First on my list was Larry Lund, the glib Bigfoot spokesman for TV documentaries, who had got me started on the Roger Patterson story when he showed me the photo of Patterson and his five fellow cowboys sitting on horses. I poured a cup of coffee and called him. He quickly agreed to a taped phone interview.

"I've been in the Bigfoot business thirty-nine years," he said proudly.

I asked him if he had ever checked into Patterson's background. He replied that he had gotten as far as trying to telephone the little Bigfoot hunter, but "Roger was a long time without a phone." When Lund finally got through to the Pattersons, he was rebuffed by Patty Patterson, so he gave up.

"Tell me your feelings about the film," I said.

Lund said that he had "torn apart" Patterson's film, but not until 1997, thirty years after the alleged sighting, did he discover that Patterson had apparently turned off his sixteen-millimeter camera twice during the filming. One day, staring bleary-eyed at the footage yet again, Lund picked up suspicious jumps in the Bigfoot image. At slow-motion speed, he detected a completely white frame at the beginning of each jump, suggesting that Patterson had thrown a spring-loaded switch to turn the camera off, then on. "Was it because he was running and stumbling?" said Lund. "Or—"

"Or because he shot the film at different times?" I finished for him. Or was it just human error? Whatever the reason, why, I asked myself, had it taken Lund most of his Bigfoot "career" to notice this oddity?

"Do you consider Bob Gimlin honest?" I asked.

Lund said that Gimlin didn't seem to know if Patterson went to the Eureka airport or to a post office to mail the film to DeAtley in Yakima. "I learned about this a long time ago," he said in exasperation, "and I've never gotten a straight answer on it. Gimlin doesn't want to talk about it anymore."

I asked him if he had heard stories of a man running around in an ape suit in the Yakima area in the late 1960s.

"Yes," Lund said. "I heard there was a little joking going on up there. One guy was in a costume running around, and he'd go out so people could see him along the edge of the road. I heard it was just a dumb-looking gorilla; it was just a matted old piece of crap, and people would laugh at it. But it was definitely not the Bluff Creek creature."

I tested the hot coffee with my lips. Why didn't Lund investigate those reports? They were emanating from Yakima where Patterson was promoting his belief in Bigfoot.

I took a sip of coffee. "Why hasn't the Bigfoot community talked about Patterson's background?"

"You could be Adolf Hitler and film a Bigfoot," Lund answered.

"The scientific community should believe the testimony of someone like Adolf Hitler!"

"Look at Hitler," Lund said. "Who cared about his personality? Of course you should—because that makes up what the person would do. Roger was what some people call a 'flake.'"

"Could the creature in the film be a man in a costume?"

"It's possible."

I said, "Well, if you were pushed to the wall, would you say the creature in the film is a Bigfoot?"

Without hesitating, Lund answered, "I would say it was an actual Bigfoot. I'm not one of those 100 percent convinced that the creature is real, but it's a shame, because I'm 90 percent sure that the Patterson film is real."

Ninety percent wasn't 100 percent in my book. Lund's lack of absolute belief in the film was strange, especially since he had spent nearly forty years studying the subject. Surely by now he had made up his mind.

I had heard enough. I thanked him for his time and signed off.

Next on my list was Al Hodgson, owner of the Willow Creek Variety Store in Willow Creek, California, the first local Bigfoot hunter to hear Patterson's amazing story on that October 20. The Internet revealed that Hodgson was helping build the Bigfoot Museum in downtown Willow Creek. The museum, conceived to generate tourist dollars, was scheduled to open in 2000. I reached Hodgson by phone on my first try.

I journeyed back to the 1960s on the slow-moving currents of his raspy voice. Patterson visited his store at least a half dozen times before the historic filming, Hodgson recollected. "The first time I met him, he was headed to Los Angeles or Hollywood with a toy. He was going to try to market it." Ah! This was apparently the wheel-and-stick toy he had "invented," and he was possibly on his way to see Jerry Merritt or an investor. Los Angeles wasn't an unfamiliar destination for Patterson. He had written in chapter 2 of his book, "About this time [1964] I had business in Los Angeles."[1]

Although Hodgson himself was interested in local Bigfoot sightings, he was a conservative businessman with a reputation, and he was reluctant to go chasing after the creature. On one visit, Patterson asked Hodgson to notify him if any Bigfoot tracks showed up in the area. In late August 1967, tracks did show up near Bluff Creek, and Green and Dahinden drove down from Canada to take a look. After they left, Hodgson called Patterson in Yakima to alert him to the tracks. The next time he talked to Patterson was shortly after 6:00 P.M. on October 20. Only moments after Hodgson had locked up his store and driven home, Patterson was using the pay phone in front of Hodgson's store. He was wild with excitement: "Al, I've got a picture of that son-of-a-buck!" When Hodgson told his wife of Patterson's discovery, she laughed.

Hodgson drove back to the store where he found Patterson and Gimlin out front. He spoke with an animated Patterson until about 7:00 P.M., but Gimlin had little to say. "I'm not so sure but Bob bought groceries while I talked to Patterson," Hodgson said.

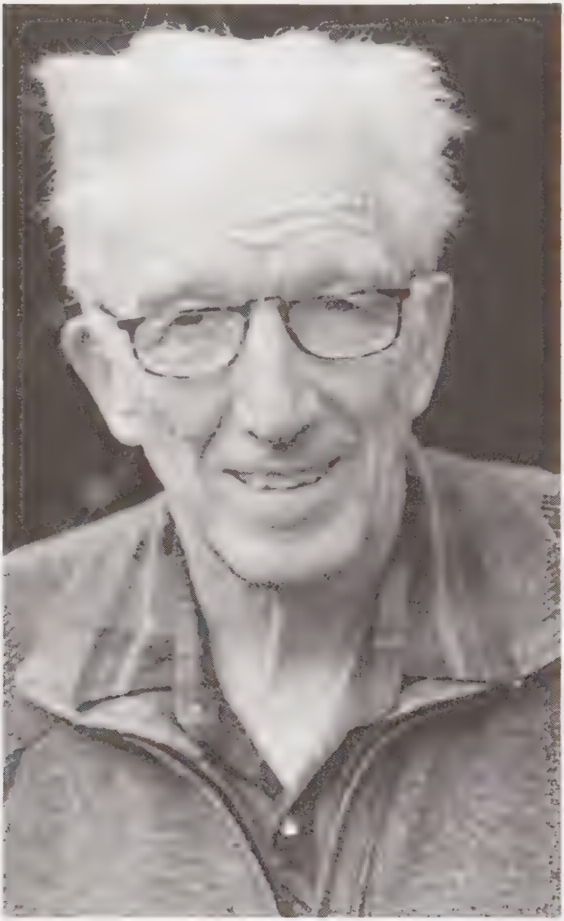
I thought it curious that Gimlin didn't seem to partake of Patterson's enthusiasm.

Leaving the two men in front of his store, Hodgson returned home. "Later that evening, sometime between 8:30 and 9:00," he recalled, "either Patterson or Syl McCoy, who worked for the local forestry department, called me to talk further about the filming at Bluff Creek." McCoy had found his own set of tracks years before. Hodgson joined McCoy, Patterson, and Gimlin in McCoy's office and for two hours listened to Patterson jabber about his Bigfoot experience. Then Patterson and Gimlin headed back for their campsite at Bluff Creek.

"Do you remember Patterson talking about mailing the film to Yakima?" I asked.

"Patterson told me he mailed it from the main post office in Eureka." After a moment of reflection, Hodgson's guess was that Patterson mailed it by 4:00 P.M., and "very definitely" before 6:00 P.M. since Patterson was at his store around that time.

During the interview, I studied a map of Northern California laid out in front of me on the desk. I could see that it was more than a half hour from Weitchpec to Willow Creek; then it was at least an hour to Eureka, if one averaged sixty miles an hour, which was doubtful, I thought, on the winding roads. If Patterson and Gimlin saw the Bigfoot at 1:30 P.M., they would have had to leave Bluff Creek ninety minutes later, at 3:00 P.M., to get to the Eureka post office by 5:00 P.M., when post offices always close. Was this even a possibility given all the post-sighting activities they claimed they'd performed, which included retrieving their scared horses and following the Bigfoot tracks on horseback up the logging road, coming back and filming the tracks, then pouring and waiting for the plaster to set,



John Green, author of *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (1978). When Green visited Roger Patterson in February 1967, Patterson talked mostly about his "inventions," not Bigfoot. Photo by Greg Long.

let alone riding their horses two miles back to Gimlin's truck, making their way back to the main highway on logging roads, and then driving furiously to Eureka? Besides, Patterson had told the Humboldt *Times Standard* that he had airmailed the film to Yakima, not gone to a post office as Hodgson said he'd claimed.

A few days later I called John Green. I knew something about Green from my studies. He was tall, bony, and lugubrious, and considered by Bigfooters as the grand old man of Bigfoot letters. Green agreed to a taped interview, and soon his Canadian accent, edged with a dreamy dullness, was taking me back to 1965, when Patterson had first visited him in his home in Harrison Hot Springs.

Patterson was suffering acutely from cancer. "He looked like a ninety-six-pound weakling in a Charles Atlas ad, a skinny little guy," said Green. Patterson had come to talk about Bigfoot. At one point he brought out some drawings he had made of the sasquatch, but Green was not impressed. "It didn't seem to me that he had a very accurate idea of what a sasquatch was all about." In fact, Green recognized Patterson as a novice: for one thing, the little man had performed no Bigfoot investigations. Green soon found out the real reason for Patterson's visit. "He wanted clippings, of course, free to use. He wanted to use material from my newspaper. I guess that was the main reason he came to see me."

Patterson got what he wanted. In October 1966, Green was surprised to learn that Patterson had actually written a book, but, of course, it was composed almost totally of other people's work. That Patterson had exploited Green's material didn't seem to faze Green. In fact, on November 12, 1966, Green wrote a letter to Patterson, which he read aloud to me during our interview: "'I received a copy of your book today, and I was most impressed with it. You've done an excellent job and should stir up some action.'"

Patterson's accomplishment—the first book devoted solely to Bigfoot—motivated Green and Rene Dahinden, Green's fellow Bigfoot hunter, to visit Patterson in February 1967 on their way to California. Patterson looked different now, "like a miniature wrestler; bulging muscles; a picture of health." (A year or two later Patterson would relapse and in early 1972 would die from the disease.)

On and off, for two days, the three men discussed Bigfoot, heatedly debating whether Bigfoot should be killed or captured alive to prove its existence (Patterson favored a live capture). Patterson also talked about local Bigfoot sightings; he had heard of sightings "right up the road where he lived." At least one of the Bigfoot witnesses lived on the road that led to Patterson's house. "Patterson's local Bigfoot reports weren't impressive," Green said.

More impressive was Patterson's Volkswagen van. "It was an oddity," Green sniggered. "No one in their right mind would suggest you could put two small horses in it." Patterson also enthusiastically showed the Canadians his inventions. In fact, the inventions dominated the conversation. "He had to make a living," Green said. "We were there when people normally would be working. And he *wasn't*." Patterson was hoping to persuade Green and Dahinden to invest.

"He came across as a used-car salesman type of personality," droned Green. "He was kind of a pitchman." Patterson told them he had invented the clip used to hold shut plastic bread bags. "We doubted that. Here he was with no money and no prospects claiming to have invented something that had come into extremely wide use."

More likely to be an actual invention was the "prop lock." Glenn Patterson had told me about it. The stick and plastic "lock" propped up trees in high winds and held fruit-laden branches upright. To advertise the prop lock, Patterson painted a huge sign on the side of his VW van, "Props dropping? Use Prop Lock," with an illustration of the notched lock to the right of the sales message.

Patterson also trotted out a prototype thermos bottle, said Green. Instead of a vacuum between the lining and the container, this thermos featured a special type of insulating foam that solidified under pressure. "He was promoting that as well," Green said. "These were the things he was most interested in at that time."

Green and Dahinden visited Patterson once more in the spring on their way back to Canada. The next time Green met Patterson was on October 22, 1967, when Green was in DeAtley's house in Yakima. Green had rushed down to Yakima. "I knew the movie was going to be there. I don't know how I knew, but I did." Not only had the young novice published the world's first book on Bigfoot, but now, only a year later, he had done the impossible—he had actually photographed a Bigfoot! Amazing! Green had been slogging away for nine years with only some casts to his name.

At DeAtley's house, Green joined Dahinden and Jim McClarin, a Bigfoot hunter from Eureka. DeAtley had already watched the footage by himself. Patterson wasn't in DeAtley's house, nor was Gimlin. Finally, Patterson appeared, and Patterson and DeAtley viewed the footage privately in a room downstairs. Afterward, they brought the projector upstairs to the living room and allowed Green, Dahinden, and McClarin to view the footage.

Green told me in his flat monotone that viewing the footage had no impact on him. "The picture looked quite familiar. It was what I expected to see."

"Where was the film processed?" I asked.

"In 1998 I asked Al DeAtley that question. He told me, 'I don't remember.' Al DeAtley doesn't want to talk about it, there's no doubt about that. I didn't get to question him at all. He knew who I was, but he wasn't going to talk about it."

"How did DeAtley act at the first showing of the footage in his house?" I asked.

"He was friendly, cautious. He didn't know that Roger would want us to see the film. I don't think he knew that."

I asked, "Are you comfortable that not having the definitive story of how the film footage was handled and processed doesn't in any way undermine the integrity of the film footage?" This seemed like a fair question, I thought. If the Bigfooters didn't know when the film was processed, then how did they know that Patterson was telling the truth when he said he shot the film on October 20?

Annoyed, Green answered, "I don't think it has any bearing on the subject at all. The film exists."

The image of Green that I'd had before the interview—a careful, analytical journalist who checked out all the facts—was quickly dissipating.

He continued. "Al DeAtley was more of a fast-talking pitchman than Roger ever was." Green went on to say that DeAtley once described how he did business with auditorium owners when he was arranging to show the movie *Bigfoot*, which he and Patterson had made. "He would put his feet up on the guy's desk, and a cigar figured in it some way, not like [President] Bill Clinton—something to do with a cigar in order to take over the other guy's turf before he started bargaining with him. Instead of meekly positioning for 'How much do you charge for this place?' his approach was to take over the interview. One thing he'd do is pull up a chair and put his feet on the man's desk. That was his method for getting the better of the deal, to take a strong position right from the beginning."

After the showing at DeAtley's, Patterson began yammering about taking the footage to Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC.

"Rene and I said this would be a mistake," Green intoned blandly. "Roger was a little guy. He was in his own setting with his cowboy boots and his big cowboy hat and his string tie and his big belt buckle. In cowboy country, this is fine, but in big offices in big cities, he's got 'hick' written all over him. He was going to be a figure of ridicule. You make them come to you. You show it on your own terms, in the situation you've set up for yourself, not knocking on people's doors begging for an audience. He would be in a much stronger position. We tried very hard to make that case." But Patterson ignored this advice.

"Was DeAtley part of that discussion?"

"Al would have had a big say in the matter, too. He did have a part in the decision. He was a one-third owner. He had financed Roger."

In addition to the footage, Patterson had two casts from the film site to show the investigators in DeAtley's house, purportedly from the left and the right foot of the Bigfoot. But Green was surprised. Less than two months before, he had been at Bluff Creek, and had made casts of two different-sized tracks on Onion Mountain, above Bluff Creek. He expected Patterson's casts to look the same—from the same creature—but they didn't. In fact, they looked different from all the other tracks Green had seen at Bluff Creek since 1958. "That had real impact," Green said, his colorless voice rising a notch. "We took it for granted that it would have been one of the known individuals from Bluff Creek. At that time there were four individuals. But Patterson's wasn't. It was a different one. It's uncommon to see multiple-sized Bigfoot in one area."

"Could people have been faking the tracks at Bluff Creek to suit their own idea of what a Bigfoot track should look like?" I asked.

"You certainly have to take it into account, that that would be an incentive for someone to do that. Sure. What's really uncommon about Bluff Creek is the number of different individuals who found tracks, and the long period over which they've been found."

I had read in the transcript of Green's 1992 interview of Gimlin that Patterson's and Gimlin's film of the Bigfoot's tracks at Bluff Creek, shown along with the Bigfoot footage to scientists at the British Columbia Museum not long after the sighting, had mysteriously vanished. Gimlin told Green: "I asked before Roger passed away, and his reply was that Al DeAtley had that somewhere. He didn't tell me exactly where. He [Roger] said that Al has the film in his possession somewhere. Of course I asked Al DeAtley about it, and he denied having it and denied it ever existed. That seems strange to me because I knew it existed and Roger knew it existed."

From my research, I knew that locals had started seeing numerous tracks in the Bluff Creek area in 1958. Outsiders like Green, Dahinden, and Patterson were periodically drawn to the area, until, in 1967, hundreds of tracks started showing. Then, seven weeks later, Patterson took the film of the century. Not long after, the tracks gradually stopped appearing. Coincidentally, when Patterson and his supporters left Bluff Creek, Bigfoot left, too.

I asked Green to recount the particulars of how he bought his copy of Patterson's film, which he discussed briefly in his book, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us.*

By 1968, Green said, he and Dahinden had bought the Canadian lecture rights to the Bigfoot footage from Patterson and DeAtley, which allowed them to show it in lecture halls. Green and Dahinden paid DeAtley $1,500 for the rights. Dahinden gave Green an IOU for half of the cost, Green said derisively, but Dahinden never paid him. "I still have the IOU."

"We were to pay DeAtley and Patterson a percentage of the gross or the net of what we made," Green recalled. The $1,500 was an advance on the percentage. Later, however, DeAtley complained that Green and Dahinden weren't making any money for him, so when another buyer came along who had money to buy rights to the footage, DeAtley canceled the contract with Green and Dahinden. "We never made anything. It was a financial disaster. DeAtley was just tidying things up to make the next deal. When he couldn't tidy it up, he made the deal anyway."

I asked Green his opinion of Bob Gimlin.

"Gimlin just took a shellacking and went about his business. I don't know if Gimlin, DeAtley, and Patterson had personal arguments or what went on. I'm sure Gimlin isn't going to tell you." He paused, then his voice rose angrily; he apparently knew I had persistently phoned Gimlin to ask for an interview: "Bob doesn't particularly appreciate being bothered about this, and his wife really doesn't appreciate it."

I sprung the question: "Did you ever hear of a man running around in a suit in Yakima?"

He was silent, then: "I don't remember anything like that; I may have heard of it."

"Is the Patterson film footage a fake?" I asked.

Green's dour voice leaped a notch. "If it's a fake, why would he have spent his time and money to see Bigfoot again?"

I knew from reading the old Bigfoot books that Patterson continued to look for Bigfoot after the Bluff Creek filming and did so until his cancer forced him to quit and stay home.

Green said firmly, "He spent all his time and all his money to the abandonment of everything else. Roger continued when he was ill, when everyone knew he was dying. We could tell he was dying; he was going to pieces before our eyes." For a moment it sounded as if Green would cry.

Then he took a breath. "He didn't use the money for anything else except trying to *see* the sasquatch! He didn't move into a big house or buy a big car, or set up his family in more affluent circumstances, or any of those things. His whole dedication was getting more confirmation of what he already had seen."

"So you wouldn't buy the theory that he was just a pitchman who was concocting a story?"

"It doesn't make any *sense!*"

"Why?" I asked.

"He didn't get anything out of it!"

"Oh, he didn't get *enough* money out of it?" I persisted.

"He didn't get *anything* out of it!" he barked.

"Well, he promoted it with Al DeAtley and got something out of it."

"He *didn't* get any of the things that a person who is just after money would do with the money when he got it!"

"His actions and behaviors after the movie was shot didn't suggest that he did it for money?"

"Absolutely!" he fumed.

"You would conclude that he was an honest man about what he saw and filmed on that day?"

"Absolutely!"

"You're basing that on your relationship with him? And your knowledge of him?"

"I'm basing that on what the film shows and the evidence others saw at the site, and what Bob Gimlin has to say. You can make a case against Roger's character as a reliable witness. I've heard you making it in this phone conversation. You can't do that about Bob Gimlin as far as I know."

"I'm interested in the whole history of this film, before and after it was shot, *and* Roger's character."

"I can kind of understand your wanting to do this," he said. "But let me suggest that it doesn't matter if that film was taken by a criminal, a crazy man, or a camera that was taken in there by an alien. . . . The film is what really counts."

I was stunned. The film could have been taken by a criminal, and still the film would count? "If the film were proved to be a fake, how would you feel?" I asked.

"It would be a matter for individual reaction." His voice had reverted back its normal, gray coolness. He said indifferently, "To people like myself, it would be almost irrelevant."

I had run out of questions, but one. "What are your final thoughts?"

"It is very sad that he died," he said mournfully, obviously touched by Patterson.

I thanked him and said good-bye.

It doesn't matter if that film was taken by a criminal. I repeated Green's words. Or, I added, as Lund would say—Adolf Hitler. For a journalist, Green struck me as unusually accepting, even shallow, when it came to matters of a witness's character, especially in this most important of all Bigfoot cases.

Next on my list was Peter Byrne, the garrulous Irishman who was part of eccentric oil millionaire Tom Slick's Pacific Northwest Expedition that he launched and funded in 1958. From 1961 through most of 1962, Byrne searched for Bigfoot evidence at Bluff Creek. After Slick was killed in a plane crash and the Expedition dissolved, Byrne returned to Nepal where he had begun his lifelong hunt for hairy, bipedal animals and turned his attention to running safaris. He was completely out of touch with the Bigfoot subject on the fateful day of

BIGFOOT LOFT RESEARCH PROJ

Peter Byrne, a former big-game hunter whose Bigfoot projects were funded by rich patrons, believed Roger Patterson without analyzing Patterson's film. "I made it quite clear to Patterson that I didn't doubt his word," said Byrne. Courtesy of Peter

October 20, 1967. At the time, he was escorting a rich colonel from Nashville, Tennessee, on a leopard hunt deep in the jungles of Nepal. When he finally heard about renewed Bigfoot sightings, he flew to the United States and soon was active again in the Bigfoot scene. He ran the Bigfoot Information Center in The Dalles, Oregon, from 1971 to 1979, and the Bigfoot Research Project in Hood River, Oregon, from 1994 to 1999, which was highly publicized.

Now here was Byrne on the phone, cheerful and eager to talk Bigfoot matters. In his clipped, cultivated accent, he told me that he hadn't heard about Roger Patterson until late 1969 when he was in New York City talking to a publisher about writing a book on big-game hunting. Soon Byrne was in Beverly Hills convincing C. V. Wood and Carroll Shelby, the designer of the Shelby Cobra sports car, to fund a Bigfoot hunt in northern Washington.

Shortly thereafter, in January 1970, Byrne arranged an interview with Patterson in Patterson's house at Tampico. Sitting with Patterson in his garden, Byrne could clearly see that Patterson was very sick, wracked with cancer, and angry and embittered because the scientific world had rejected his film. After the interview, Byrne viewed the footage several times. As I listened to Byrne, I took notes on a pad.

"I made it quite clear to Patterson that I didn't doubt his word," Byrne said.

"When Patterson said, 'We saw it, we photographed it,' I accepted that, even though I hadn't gotten into an analysis of the film at that time."

I was taken aback. This quick acceptance of Patterson's word seemed out of character for a supposed seasoned Bigfooter. Wasn't he supposedly a professional tracker with a steady head in a field swarming with questionable characters? Why hadn't he dug into the film?

Byrne admitted that during his approximate six visits with Patterson, he didn't question Patterson a lot about the footage. "Patterson resented any kind of questioning, and he'd get very angry, and make it quite known that he was angry."

That made sense, I thought. Why should Patterson welcome any tough-minded probing into the circumstances of the film if it were faked?

Byrne didn't ask Patterson outright if the footage was real. "I had to be very careful talking to him because he was very touchy, very sensitive on that subject. The newspapers were calling him."

Instead, Byrne concentrated on finding out about Patterson's Bigfoot hunting *techniques*. For example, he found it interesting that Patterson and Gimlin were looking for Bigfoot on horseback. Elephants are used in Asia to hunt wild animals, and Byrne had a friend who hunted tigers sitting on the back of a buffalo. Later, Byrne did start interviewing people regarding Patterson's character. Wherever he went, he found out that Rene Dahinden had already been there.

"Rene thinks the film is real," Byrne said in his dignified voice. "Rene went after Patterson with a *vengeance*. Rene didn't like Patterson at all. I think he hated him. 'You're putting this over on us. You're putting this over on everyone. You're *not* going to put it over on me.' Boy, he went on the road! He went out there to destroy that film, to disprove it, find out how it was faked. And then eventually, after fifteen years, he gave up. He said, 'I think it's real.' He went after Patterson almost viciously. I remember him talking to me, 'I'm going to get this guy! I'm going to show what a fake he is!' And he was never able to show that."

In 1995 Byrne bought a copy of the footage from Dahinden, had it digitized, and hired a computer analyst to study it. I shook my head, amazed. It had taken Byrne *twenty-five years* to begin studying the film. Why so long?

Byrne did look into Patterson's actions. "Sadly, there were certain aspects of the film that I didn't realize were very, very important, as far as Patterson's credibility is concerned."

One aspect was how the film got from Eureka to Yakima. "It's a very difficult area," Byrne sighed, "and I have put in hundreds of hours of work on that. I've traveled, God knows how many thousands of miles, talking to people trying to piece that together."

Byrne assumed that to mail canisters of sixteen-millimeter film from Northern California to Yakima or Seattle on Friday, October 20, 1967, a person would use a bus, the U.S. postal service, an airline, or a charter aircraft. So Byrne traveled to Northern California to investigate directly. He talked to old, retired postmasters and learned that the Willow Creek post office would have been closed by the time Patterson rolled into town. Even if mailed from Eureka or nearby Arcata, the package couldn't have been delivered to the Yakima post office on a Saturday—it would have been closed.

"I talked to the Greyhound bus people, and I actually got into their records, and they had no bus service that would have taken a package to Yakima, or to Seattle, in that time frame."

The airlines? In 1967, neither Arcata nor Eureka had airports, although there was an airport halfway between Eureka and Arcata. He discovered no scheduled air services that would have carried freight. "That left one other thing—a charter."

Five charter pilots were living in the area in 1967; Byrne tracked down four of them. "Each very graciously either let me see or read from his log books." On October 20, 1967, there was rain and strong winds. "The pilots told me, 'No way would any of us have flown unless it was an extreme emergency.'" The pilots had no record of any of them flying to Yakima or Seattle with a package. The fifth pilot was dead. Byrne had yet to find the pilot's widow.

"For awhile, Patterson had a fellow working for him," Byrne continued, "Dennis Jenson. Jenson told me that he was in Patterson's house in 1968. There was a huge box of mail that had come in—stacks of letters and papers and so on—and Patterson was clearing this out. Dennis said that Patterson would take each envelope out, and he would hold it up to a bright light, and if there was a check in it, he would open it. If there was no check, he would throw it away. He pulled out a receipt and said, 'There's the registered receipt for the film, when we sent it to Yakima,' and threw that away."

"Does the mystery of how the film was mailed and processed bother you?" I asked.

"It does a little bit, because I've been involved in exposing several faked films." Byrne referred to the 1970 Ivan Marx film, which purported to show a ten-foot-tall, black, cripple-footed Bigfoot with awkward and jerky movements roaming the countryside near Bossburg, Washington, where Marx lived. Byrne investigated and concluded, "Marx made the film two or three weeks earlier than he said. If Patterson and Gimlin had faked the Bluff Creek film, they would have done exactly the same thing. They would have made it two or three weeks earlier."

Byrne also found curious Patterson's arrest for grand larceny. Byrne tracked down the camera shop owner who'd pressed the charges, Harold Mattson. "He confirmed that Patterson rented the camera in May 1967 and never paid the rental fees to where in November 1967 they went out to his house after sending him several warnings and a registered letter. The Yakima County Sheriff's Department finally went out and arrested him and hauled him in."

After talking to Mattson, Byrne tried to find the original camera. "I wasn't so much interested in the wrongdoing as much as I was interested in the numbers on the camera and the number of the lens. It's difficult, very difficult after all these years. A lot of people have died since then. Patterson hadn't paid any rental.

It was something simple, like $30 a month, or maybe fifty. And he didn't pay it. And there was something else. The check bounced. He bought something like $300 or $400 worth of film, and something about a check bouncing. Roger wasn't very good with money. And Roger didn't have a very good reputation as far as paying his bills. Most of us believed that when he left there were bills all over the place, from what we heard. He didn't have a very good reputation for integrity in that area."

"What about Al DeAtley? Did you ask him about how the film was processed?"

"I did. I talked to him two to three times on the phone. I tried to see him, but he wouldn't see me. He doesn't want to talk to people about it. It's extremely difficult to get him to talk."

Byrne felt that DeAtley was inaccessible because of his schedule and his extreme wealth. "A man like that leads a private life and avoids hangers-on knocking on the door for handouts." But one day Byrne managed to get DeAtley on the phone. "He said to me, 'It's fake. I know it's fake.' I said, 'How do you know it's fake?' He said, 'Listen. He [Patterson] told us all he was going down there and find the Bigfoot and shoot some footage and come back. He did. He went down there. That's just goddamn luck, or something. That doesn't happen in real life, you know.' Ivan Marx did the same thing. He was living in Northern California, and he told people he was going to go to northern Washington and find a Bigfoot, get footage, and come back and sell it and make lots of money and be famous. He did exactly the same thing. Then, at the same time, almost in the same breath, DeAtley said, 'But, don't quote me on that with people here. This is the family here [in Yakima].' DeAtley is married to Roger's sister. DeAtley said, 'They all believe Roger. They all believed in his integrity. They all believe that film is real. I'm the outsider here.' He had a few very derogatory things to say about Roger. My guess is he really didn't like him."

"Well, then why did DeAtley support Roger?"

"Maybe," Byrne said in his proper accent, "maybe he did. I asked him about that, and he wasn't willing to talk about it. I asked him the crucial question: 'All of my reason for calling you, actually—I'm not interested in the ownership of the film, I'm not interested in the politics, or the money—I have only one question. It would be great if you could answer it.' I said, 'How did you get the film before you took it to Seattle?' He thought for a moment, or he seemed to think; he was on the phone, I couldn't see him. And he said, 'I can't remember!'"

I laughed. "How could he not remember?"

Byrne continued warmly, "I said, 'Would you think about it, and let me call you back?' 'OK, you can call me back.' I called him back a week later. He said, 'I can't remember. It was thirty years ago; I can't remember.' If he was promoting the film to me, verbally on the phone, 'Peter, it's real. Don't be inquiring into it. You know, it's authentic,' but he wasn't. He was saying, 'It's faked.' So if he had been involved in the fakery in any way, he would have backed it up surely by saying, 'Well, actually we made it two weeks before, you know. We had it processed two weeks before.' Something like that."

I put my pen down. I found Byrne's reasoning illogical—that if DeAtley believed the film was a fake, then DeAtley would have confessed to how it had been faked. But why would he? A wealthy businessman and one of the proverbial "pillars" of the community, he would be risking his reputation with such a confession.

"Patterson was also making a movie," Byrne said.

"Before October 20, 1967?"

"Yes. That also detracted from the appearance of credibility. If you make a movie about Bigfoot, what do you need in it? You need the star; you need Bigfoot."

"Right."

"It could be faked," Byrne admitted. "It could be an incredibly sophisticated hoax. But if it is, we don't know how it was done. In going back to Patterson and Gimlin, we look at two people who just didn't have the capability of making something which is such an incredibly good hoax."

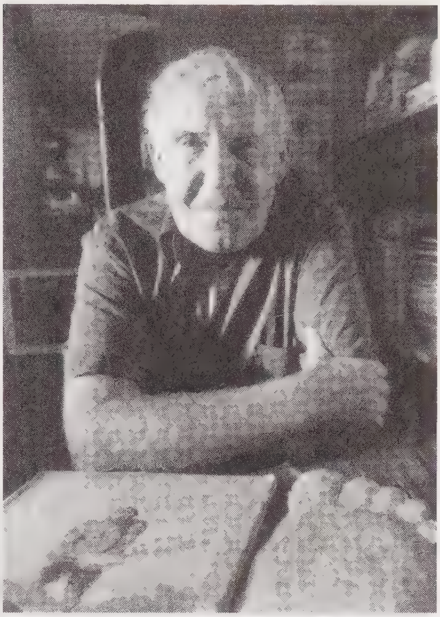
To support his contention, Byrne cited his trip to Walt Disney studios in 1972, where Disney's chief of animation and four assistants viewed Patterson's footage and praised it as a beautiful piece of work although, they said, it must have been shot in a studio. When Byrne told them it was shot in the woods of Northern California, "They shook their heads and walked away."

Byrne told me no one in the Bigfoot field seemed to know who had the original Patterson footage—the master from which all the many copies over the years have been made. I was amazed. Why would anyone bother with the Patterson case if they couldn't inspect the original footage? It was fundamental science. Byrne had heard that American National Enterprises had the footage, but ANE went out of business, and Peregrine Entertainment bought the company. Then Peregrine was bought by Century Group of Los Angeles. When Century Group went bankrupt in 1996, Byrne rushed to Deerfield Beach, Florida, where an accountant was auctioning off the company's assets to pay creditors. The company's films were in storage in Los Angeles, but a search failed to turn up the Patterson footage.

"The Patterson I knew was a very angry, frustrated man," Byrne concluded. "I really didn't know the prefilm Patterson, what kind of person he was. He did not have a good reputation for integrity, that's true; and that in a way must detract from the authenticity of the film. As he said himself, 'I'm the wrong kind of person to get this footage.' Dennis Jenson and I were leaving for the last time, and Patterson was sitting in a chair, and he was like a human skeleton, terribly sick. And he said, 'Peter, you know, we should have shot that thing. Then people would have believed us.' That was the last thing he said to me."

We exchanged pleasantries for a few more minutes and then said good-bye.

Looking at my notes, I found Byrne's attempt to dig up the facts regarding the genesis of Patterson's footage commendable. Byrne was actually behaving like a professional investigator. But why he had waited thirty years to do so was



Rene Dahinden, who spent $30,000 on investigating Roger Patterson's film, admitted that Patterson was a "crook" and a "shiftless deadbeat," but nonetheless promoted the film as authentic. Photo by Julie Lee.

strange. In his final years, had he decided to probe more deeply into the basis of his Bigfoot beliefs?

The last Bigfooter on my list was Rene Dahinden. Before I called him, I reviewed what I knew about him. At sixty-eight years old, he was a small man, feisty, fond of off-color jokes, on the track of Bigfoot longer than any other person in North America. Born in Switzerland, he moved to Canada as a young man in 1952. In 1956, he became hooked on Bigfoot stories. He lived much of his life in a small trailer home on the grounds of the Vancouver Gun Club in Richmond, near Vancouver, BC, where he stored his collection of Bigfoot data and memorabilia. He slept in a separate facility, a metal box about the size of several large dumpsters. Recently, a British Columbia brewing company had paid him to play himself in a TV commercial promoting Kokanee beer. In the commercial, Dahinden faces the camera while an off-camera voice asks him if he ever used Kokanee beer to lure a sasquatch. Dahinden answers, "Do you think I'm crazy or something?" unaware that behind him a sasquatch is sneaking into his trailer to make off with a case of beer.

I also knew that Dahinden was the greatest advocate of Patterson's footage. Starting about 1975 he started a lawsuit against Patty Patterson, ANE, and other film companies to acquire rights to the footage. During the legal wars that lasted years, he also bought out Bob Gimlin's rights to the film. Gimlin had also sued DeAtley and Patty Patterson for his share. In 1978 Patty Patterson and Dahinden settled. Dahinden now owned 51 percent of the original film footage, 51 percent of the video cassette rights, and 100 percent of the still photo rights (all 952 frames of the footage). Patty Patterson owned 49 percent of the footage and 100 percent of all TV rights. The Bluff Creek footage was, clearly, a source of income for Dahinden.

"I remember I became interested in Bigfoot in June 1956," he said over the phone in a weird Germanic-Swiss-Canadian accent, glottal, gruff, and almost comical. The idea of Bigfoot took hold of him so strongly that in 1963 he took on a job where he could work on mundane matters without having to think. The job was collecting lead from the skeet-shooting range on the grounds of the Vancouver Gun Club where he lived, which he could perform automatically while thinking constantly on the Sasquatch.

"Every time someone shot, there vas one ounce and an eighth of lead pellet flying out." He walked the skeet-shooting range summer after summer, salvaging the lead, washing it, drying it, polishing it, and reselling it. One summer he picked up thirty tons of shot. He filled fifty-five-gallon barrels with it. "I could come and go as I vanted. I vas totally, absolutely focused on this. I could t'ink about the Patterson film, and my investigation, rip it to pieces, analyze it, dissect it." After eleven years of marriage, he divorced. He said with annoyance, "I didn't get sidetracked by a vife, kids, and cats and dogs and mortgages and all this *crap*."

I asked him if he would tell me about Patterson.

He exploded. "I vouldn't do that!" He said that he had spent thirty years since the summer of 1968 investigating the film, at least $30,000 total, and he wasn't about to help me. "I vent to Bluff Creek in 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1975, and 1985. I spent months in the area and the film site. So, everybody else's friggin' opinion is of *no* value because they don't know a damn t'ing about it! So vhen everybody says, 'It's a controversy,' it's *not* a controversy! Except someone's blabbering avay. That's what really gets to me, just balls me!"

I let him rave about Green and Byrne and their sloppy approach to the Patterson footage ("They were superficial!"), his disgust for today's generation of Bigfooters, and the effrontery of uninformed people like myself who come along attempting to understand the film and the case. Then, having vented for the moment, he began slipping out information about the film and Patterson. I engaged him in conversation that went on for hours.

"Where do you think the film was developed?" I asked.

"Ve haven't got a clue," he said sullenly.

"Does that disturb you?"

"Yeah," he snapped. "It does. It does. Ve asked Al DeAtley. 'I'm not supposed to tell,' DeAtley said. Ve should have said to DeAtley, 'Show me the box it vas shipped in. Show us the receipt.' Ve didn't."

In depressed tones, Dahinden talked about how he blew his chances to find out when and where the film was processed. In January 1968, DeAtley loaned the original film to him and Green to make copies (when they bought the Canadian lecture rights). Dahinden never looked at the edge of the film strip, which would show where and when the film was developed. In 1974 or 1975, he had another opportunity when he was in Los Angeles where the film was in storage. He didn't inspect the film. "I vas clueless," he said sadly.

"So we don't have the provenance of the film," I said.

He let loose. "OK, look! Vhat ve have is *that fucking film* vas filmed at *that* fucking film site, and there's a hairy creature, man or sasquatch, valking in front. That's all I'm fucking concerned about!"

As far as inspecting the original camera, Dahinden said glumly, "Ve also never tracked down the camera. It disappeared. There are real dumb t'ings I should have done. The problem is *ve didn't do our job.*"

"You know," I said, "Peter Byrne has looked into the mystery of how the film got from California to Yakima."

"Yeah, I know. The point is nobody knows vhat the fuck happened."

"Do you think you know who has the original film?" I asked.

"Yeah, we t'ink so." His and Patty Patterson's attorneys wrote letters to the owner. "They didn't even answer us."

"Can you give me the owner's name?"

"I'm not going to dig it up for you," he hissed.

"Can you say that the film was shot on October 20, 1967, with 100 percent confidence?"

"No. That's vhen they announced it vas taken. Look," he snarled, "it vas taken in the fall, in October!"

"It could have been taken earlier," I challenged.

"I don't know. I vasn't there."

He said regretfully that he should have gone to the film site himself; he was in close striking distance, in Willow Creek on October 21, 1967, where he had traveled by bus from San Francisco when Green first notified him of Patterson's find. In fact, he was standing next to Al Hodgson in his store when Patterson called from a phone booth on his way out of Weitchpec. Instead, Dahinden hurried to Yakima to see the film. "I should have gone up there [to the site] somehow. Even if I had to valk, for Christ sake, and look at those damn tracks!"

In addition, ten days after Patterson and Gimlin left Bluff Creek, Bob Titmus, the local cast-maker of Bigfoot tracks, went to the film site and made casts of ten of the prints supposedly left by the creature. "Titmus fucked up!" Dahinden said in disgust. "He never counted the tracks. He never photographed them. He didn't even have a measuring tape along to measure the step length." Titmus informed Green in a letter that he had found the Bigfoot tracks going up a hillside to a resting place where the beast apparently watched Patterson and Gimlin below. "Titmus vas a storyteller. I don't believe a fucking word of it. You have to know the location."

I steered Dahinden to the question of Patterson's honesty.

"Yeah, he vas irresponsible."

"I have a problem with the word 'irresponsible.' Doesn't that mean 'dishonest'?" I offered.

"He vas irresponsible in his business dealings," he growled. "We all know that. Vell, anyvay, people who did any investigation."

"And the pattern you discovered was that he was irresponsible," I said.

"Yeah."

"Or dishonest."

He paused, thinking. "Same t'ing. Look, it's the film ve're investigating, in the final analysis. It didn't matter if Patterson was molesting little boys and girls, or screwing his goats, or vhatever."

"That wouldn't matter?"

"Vell," he laughed, "I vouldn't shake his hands, let me put it this way."

I laughed along with him; I had discovered over the past hour one of his techniques: he liked to inject humor into discussions to skirt various issues. I continued to chuckle along with him as I opened a folder that held a newspaper interview published August 23, 1979, in the *Clackamas County News*, Oregon, entitled "The Mort Report, Bigfoot Experts Search for Sasquatch Here."

"I've come across a news article, Rene. I'm going to quote. 'The personality of Roger Patterson, now dead, also raised questions about the validity of the film. Patterson was a shiftless deadbeat "and jerk" who never paid his bills, etc., according to Dahinden.'"

"Did I say *that?*" he said, caught off guard.

I quoted further: "'Patterson was also a crook.'"

"Did I say that!"

"Yes. What did you mean when you said he was a 'crook'?"

"Because he didn't pay his bills." Dahinden quickly added that newspapers were full of reports of people being sued for not paying their bills. It was very common, he insisted; it didn't mean much. "As I told you," he spat out, "Patterson is here, and the film is over there. *Forget* Patterson! Look at that *fucking film!*"

I wasn't satisfied with Dahinden's definition of honesty.

Dahinden repeated that Patterson was poor at his business dealings. Then he made a surprise admission: "Patterson told me that the Yakima postmaster hauled him in two, t'ree times because he collected money off people for books and never sent them out."

"Then it sounds like Patterson was dishonest," I said.

"Vell, he vas irresponsible."

"Come on!" I said. "He was being dishonest. He could have been arrested for that."

"Of course, he could have been."

"So, it's dishonest!" I shouted. "He broke the law!"

"Ve call it mail fraud, pure and simple," Dahinden said.

"So it doesn't matter if the photographer was a thief, or if the photographer ripped off people?"

"Of course, ve all consider this. But in the final analysis, it doesn't matter if the guy vas a pedophile. In the final analysis, vhat we are debating is *the creature on the film*. Vhen people ask me, I tell them all about Patterson, I mean, a clean version."

A clean version?

I asked him if I could buy a copy of the film from him to study it. "No, you're not qualified," he said bluntly.

He agreed that Patterson's pre–Bluff Creek documentary efforts raised suspicions, but that Patterson was incapable of making a Bigfoot suit.

I asked him if he ever heard stories of someone running around Yakima in an ape suit. When he didn't answer, I asked again.

He said nothing; then finally: "I don't listen to stories anymore unless they can back it up with evidence. *Produce the evidence.* Vhere's the bloody fur suit? That's vhy I followed the money trail. I vanted to see who, vhen, vhere, vhat, vhat's happened, who got vhat and vhen. I said, 'I'll be unable to prove that the film is real. Therefore, I'm going to prove it's a fake.' I investigated everyt'ing around it, and if there's a man in a goddamn fur suit, I would have found him, I'm sure of it."

As far as his own personal evidence for Bigfoot, Dahinden said he had none, although he photographed tracks found by other people. "I never found foot prints on my own. They vere alvays found by somebody else. Anybody who goes looking for sasquatch is stupid because the chances of finding something are so remote that you just shake your head."

I wanted Dahinden's final answer. "Do you think you can separate the film from the man, from the photographer?"

"Of course!"

"You think you can separate the two?" I repeated.

"Just examine the fucking film!" he yelled. "Fuck Al DeAtley! Fuck Roger Patterson! And fuck Bob Gimlin! OK? Ignore the human element. *Look at the fucking film!*"

I had my fill, and I thanked the cantankerous old Bigfooter and hung up.

As I labeled the audiotapes and clipped my notes together, I summarized in my mind what I had heard. The old Bigfoot hunters hadn't done their job. They had failed to nail down the essential facts in the first few days after Patterson returned to Yakima from Bluff Creek—when and from where was Patterson's film mailed; who processed the film and when; where was the filmstrip of the Bluff Creek Bigfoot's tracks; and whether or not the film was even taken on October 20, 1967, when Patterson said it was. As years passed, the aging Bigfooters seemed to lose track of who owned Patterson's original film or where it was located, and only decades later made an attempt to find it. Green, a journalist, didn't act like one and never looked into Patterson's background. Byrne never really interrogated Patterson. And Dahinden, despite his suspicions regarding Patterson, accepted the film's validity and continued to parrot the line that the credibility of Patterson had nothing to do with the film. It was a sad state of affairs, in my opinion.

I decided to call Patty Patterson. The Roger Patterson story was incomplete without her memories of her husband. And besides, as the co-owner of rights to the footage, she probably had an opinion regarding the film. However, I had heard that she didn't give interviews, so I expected I'd get nowhere with her. Indeed, such was the case, even though she spoke with me for forty-five minutes.

"This is not an interview," she said frequently in a cool voice to remind me that I couldn't publish her answers to my questions. As I peppered her with questions, she was irritable and defensive. As I punctuated our open-ended conversation with repeated requests for an interview, she declined again and again.

Under the rules, I could publish nothing she said. She let me know that she had an attorney. Finally, I thanked her and said good-bye. It would be futile to get her to go on record, about anything, probably ever. I didn't blame her. I was sure she had made her share of money from the film over the years.

So I sat down, turned on the computer, and set up a folder, "Patterson Book," and started writing chapter one of the Roger Patterson story. There was much to tell I realized as I started pecking at the keyboard, and much more, I was certain, to uncover about Roger Patterson and his infamous Bigfoot film.

NOTE

1. Roger Patterson, *Do Abominable Snowmen Really Exist?* (New Westminster, BC: Pyramid Publications, 1996), p. 15.

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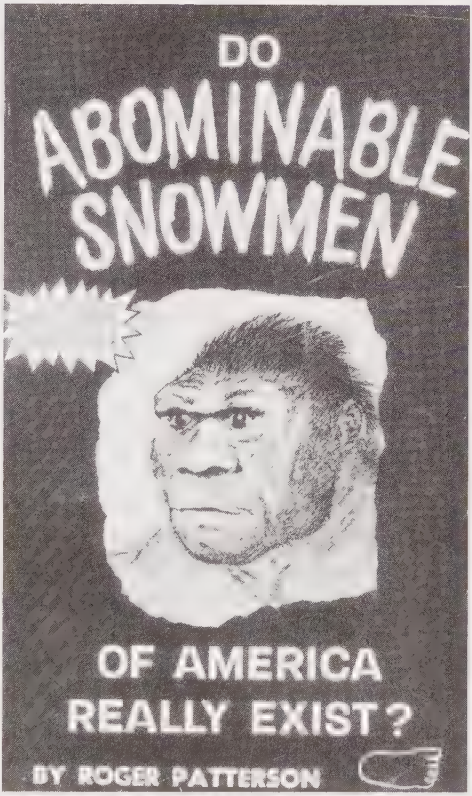
GLEN KOELLING

And then he [Roger Patterson] also went to a western clothing store there in town and did the same thing, outfitting himself handsomely in western clothes and—and—and left me with the bill.

—Glen Koelling

It was now January 1999, and I had received no phone call from Bob Heironimus's attorney, Barry Woodard. So, one evening, while Pat was labeling folders, my eyes were drawn to a soft-cover reprint of Patterson's *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* (Franklin Press printed the original book in Yakima in the fall of 1966.) On the cover, Patterson's cartoon drawing of a Barney Rubble-like, Cro-Magnon man stared out at the world with empty, dimwitted eyes. After thumbing through the 169 pages, I concluded that if a reader was looking for a



Roger Patterson's Bigfoot book, published by Patterson in 1966, was a collection of Bigfoot newspaper articles embellished with Patterson's cartoons.

detailed, well-argued case proving the existence of Bigfoot, Patterson's book wasn't it.

Ninety-five percent of the book was composed of reprints of newspaper stories describing Bigfoot sightings in California, the Northwest, and Canada; the rest of the book contained sketchy stories of Patterson's own Bigfoot "pre-expeditions," trips to interview witnesses in Washington state, and trips to Bluff Creek in the early 1960s. Accompanying the stories were two dozen of Patterson's imaginative cartoon, ink drawings of Bigfoot creatures, supposedly observed by eyewitnesses, as well as several maps pinpointing the general location of the sightings. The book concluded with Ken Pettijohn's sighting, the Yakima high school student who, on September 19, 1966, was terrified by a huge, hairy man that stepped out in front of his car as he was driving home one stormy night. It was curious that this sighting occurred just in time to be included in the book before it went to press.

The final two pages of the book contained an advertisement for the Abominable Snowmen Club of America located in Yakima. Readers could join the club for "only $5.95, plus 50 cents for postage and handling." "Make this the biggest day of your life—write NOW." In return, the reader would receive a certificate of two-year membership in the club ("good until September 30, 1968") signed by Roger Patterson; two, twelve-inch, long-playing record albums with "over an hour of actual recorded story interviews" (these featured, among others, William Roe's observation of a human-looking, female sasquatch sporting breasts, and Albert Ostman's personal story of his kidnapping by sasquatch in British Columbia); and a quarterly bulletin describing the latest sasquatch news with "all the findings of our planned expeditions into California and Washington's wilderness areas." If that wasn't enough, a club member could send in a letter describing his or her qualifications and might very well become a member of the "Greatest Expedition in History": "If you are selected, you will have a special part (paid a salary) in the Expedition." Wow! *Paid* to hunt for Bigfoot! What an opportunity! What a club! "In return," Patterson wrote, "you will send us any information you have on these giant creatures, and we will pass it along to the rest of the club." Boy, that Roger Patterson, I thought, he knew how to make money, selling other people's stories in a newsletter—first those of news reporters, and then his club members' stories, who, when they bought a subscription to the newsletter, *paid* Patterson to publish them.

On the back of the title page, I read the copyright information. The book was no longer owned by the Roger Patterson estate, but by Dahinden who had copyrighted the book in 1979 and renewed it in 1995. I noticed that someone named Glen A. Koelling held the copyright before Dahinden, in 1966. This was odd since Patterson had held the copyright the same year. He must have sold the copyright *right after* he published the book. Since Patterson's goal was to make money off Bigfoot, why had he sold his copyright so quickly, just when he was getting started with his Bigfoot business? To find out, I tracked down Glen

Glen Koelling bankrupted himself by investing in Roger Patterson. Koelling had considered Patterson's bigfoot book "a hot title, a hot subject." Koelling ended up leaving Yakima and rejoining the military for "financial reasons." Photo by Pat Long.

Koelling (pronounced Ko-ling), alive and well in Enumclaw, Washington. He agreed to a tape-recorded interview over the phone.

Koelling had the energy of an upbeat, happy-go-lucky-sounding guy, sixty-two, and a self-proclaimed "entrepreneur." "I've been in business for myself since 1975," he said, "and I've done insurance, and I had a scooter business just recently where I sold electric scooters to handicapped people and senior citizens and so on."

Koelling had first met Patterson at Yakima High School in 1951, he recalled. A showoff, Patterson would often do "wheelies" on a motorcycle in front of the high school. "He could whip himself at the corner, and he could go a couple blocks or more with that motorcycle up in the air," Koelling said in admiration.

But he never knew Patterson well. "He and I weren't friends. You know, he was extremely strong, a small individual, and very agile. You just couldn't miss Roger. He had a cockiness about him that just was, for his size, really something. He had to defend himself everywhere he went. He was a little bit of a loner. He didn't run with the crowds, you know. He wasn't one of the boys, one of the popular ones."

At the end of his junior year, Koelling quit high school and joined the Marines. After his tour of duty, he returned to Yakima, attended Yakima Valley College, and eventually graduated from Central Washington University in Ellensburg. In 1961 he re-upped, this time with the Navy as an officer and pilot. In 1966, after two tours in Vietnam, Koelling left the Navy and bought a twenty-acre ranch on Slaven Road near Tampico where he boarded horses. In 1966, Koelling and Patterson bumped into each other, perhaps at the Tampico Store while Koelling was buying groceries. Patterson told Koelling that he remembered him from high school. He said he was trying to publish a book. "We talked for a few minutes about the book, and then I told him I'd like to see it, and so he brought it up to my house."

At Koelling's house, Patterson handed him the book, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* "He had gone to a printer there in the area and had them print it. When he showed it to me, it was really a mess, *terrible.* Sometimes you'd read a sentence, and half or portion of the sentence wasn't even on the page. Pages were not in sequential order like they should have been. When you tried to bind it the way they had printed it, sometimes the words would be stuck in the binding."

Before he knew it, Koelling said to Patterson, "Why don't I go ahead and take care of it?"

So Koelling visited the printer. He learned that the printer wouldn't return Patterson's original camera-ready sheets until Patterson paid the bill for the printing job. "So, I paid that bill and found a different printer. And then there were some chapters in it that had to be rewritten, and the last chapter had to be finished." Finally, the book was reprinted. "I paid for it all."

"Why?" I asked.

"Roger wanted that book printed really bad 'cause he'd put a lot of time and effort into it, and a lot of travel and so on. He was not doing well financially at the time. In fact, he was really strapped, and he was hoping that this book might give him a leg up on his bills and his debts and give him a chance to really go out and pursue the Bigfoot the way he wanted to. I think he came more to me for advice on it more than anything. And when I saw it, I saw the commercial value in it, frankly. I was fascinated by it. Being stupid I didn't know the problems of getting a book printed and getting it out on the market. So we just pressed ahead on faith that we could do it."

Patterson was so strapped for cash that he sold the copyright to Koelling for about $3,500. "And then I think I put a couple thousand up with the new printer to get it started. And I also went in and rewrote parts of it. The printer and I wrote most of the last chapter. We left it there as if Roger had written it."

The printer's name was Ed Cassidy, the owner of Franklin Press. "Ed was a fabulous guy, an incredible human being. I think he ended up losing money on the book."

"Why did you buy the copyright?" I asked.

Koelling wanted to make sure I didn't think it was for greed. "Frankly, I just wanted him to release it [the copyright], and so I could go ahead and print it and publish it and put it out. I mean, my purpose was to get it published and make us both some money."

The first press run of the book was 2,500 hard-bound copies, followed by 2,500 paperbacks.

"How did you market and distribute it?"

"Uh, that's a story in and of itself," he sighed. "I went to the local book distributor there in Yakima and talked to him, a very, very helpful individual. Basically, he explained to me you have to go through a big distributor out of California or someplace like that. And he said they're tough to get to, and you have to make lots of deals, and all this kind of thing. Or you have to get a big publisher to do it for you. Well, we sent it out to several people, large publishers, and they sent it back to us almost as fast as they got it. So what I did is, I went to this guy and got a list of all the book dealers in the state of Washington.

"I went around and I called on the guys that go out and put them on the racks, in those days in the grocery stores and stuff like that. I also would contact book stores in various areas, like in Yakima, Tri-Cities, Spokane, and Seattle, and so on. I would go in and talk to the guy that was distributing the books and tell him that we would do all the advertising and get a good story in the newspaper for him, that he would hit the racks with the books about the same time, and that they were not to give them back to us with the covers torn off. I would pay the shipping back and forth. So I would go to the book dealer, the rack dealer, and the book stores, get it set up, and then I'd go to the newspaper, and I would tell them this guy Roger Patterson had wrote this book that was fascinating, was coming in town, and we'd give them an exclusive interview.

"Well, we got a lot of front page coverage because Roger would come in, and they would interview him, and they'd put him on the front page about the same time we'd put the book on the racks. Then we would also do a book-signing party at one of the local bookstores and cover that in the newspaper, too. Normally we'd buy an ad in the newspaper to cover that. And we peddled a lot, we peddled about five thousand books. We peddled them in just a little over a month and a half in the state of Washington."

"Wow," I said. I felt sorry for Koelling suddenly. It seemed he had done all the work. "Sounds like you spent a lot of your time and money yourself traveling around Washington."

"You bet!" Koelling said with enthusiasm. "Yeah, I did. I gave a lot of time and energy to it."

"Now, was the idea, then, that you were splitting the profits with him on the book?"

"No, what we had done. . . ." he said, his voice charged with boundless energy and the hope of the eternal optimist. "Roger had already formed a company called Trail Blazer Research, and so I incorporated it, called it Trail Blazer Research, Incorporated, with the idea that we would use that for him to go on searching for Bigfoot, plus the fact that we would also see if we could come up with some new products that we could market. The book really never made either one of us any money, because what we did was turn around and print more copies. Then, because we didn't have enough money to print it the first time, we had to take a portion of all the money that was coming in to pay Ed part of what we owed him because he'd gone out on a limb for us."

"Oh, I see."

"And so we never really made any money off the book."

"How many weeks or months did you personally spend traveling around promoting this?"

"Well, uh, from the time I met Roger until the time I decided that it just wasn't gonna go. . . . Well, financially it just didn't produce for me, and I'd spent pretty much all the money I had. It was probably—I'm going to say somewhere from nine months to a year. Now, I'm talking from the time I started working, 'cause it took us quite a while to redo that book and put it out on paper and get it into the printing schedule, get it finished up. I think we had to order the covers from somebody else because I don't think Ed could produce them. I don't remember for sure, but I know there were a lot of delays and problems getting it out. And then once we started getting it out, there were several months there of planning our strategy and then going after it. And then it kinda tilted. Like I said, we did a hard-bound edition, and I had this guy do an advertisement letter to send out to all the libraries because we were getting a lot of interest all over the country then, and stupidly, I didn't read the ad letter that we put out, and so we put our name on the ad, but we didn't put our phone number and address on it. Can you believe that?"

Actually, I didn't find it hard to believe.

"Anyway," Koelling continued, still pumped, "it went out to the libraries, and we got quite a few orders from libraries for the hard-bound edition, but it didn't. . . ." He paused. "Because the name and so on wasn't on it, we didn't get a lot of money. We didn't get the kind of sales we needed to make it go."

"Right."

"And we thought that once we got into the libraries, then we could go back to the *big* publishers and say, 'Hey, look, those people buy this, they're interested. We've sold this many over the counter in the state of Washington, and here's the library sales, you know. You need to take another look at it.' That was kind of our last gasp, you know. I went back in the service in 1967, and that was the end of it. I had to go back and get recouped financially. I was a pilot, and they were looking for flight instructors, you know, and so I went back in for another three years."

I hated to ask him the question, but I did: "So when you got out of the service in '66, basically what you're telling me is you took most of your savings and plowed it into this book?"

"That's exactly right," he said, unfazed. Perhaps time had diluted the pain.

"And you didn't have anything left over?"

"No."

"And so why did you do that? Were you just passionately interested in the subject, or you just thought you'd make a bunch of money, or what was your motivation?"

"I think two or three things. Number one, I liked Roger, and I really liked his family. He had a neat wife, Pat. And then he had two or three little boys and a daughter. Second, I had an altruistic desire to want to help them, too, because she was very supportive and loyal to him, and the little kids were, you know, they just loved him to pieces. I just. . . . That was part of it, too. Thirdly, I thought it was a fascinating subject, and I thought that with the information that Roger had, he had a tremendous amount of opportunity, and of course I wanted to make some money. I thought that it would give us a leg up to do more books or gather more. . . . In fact, we started a club with it. It was in the back of the book. You could tear out the form, and you could get a newsletter, and gee, we had hundreds of those people sign up, you know, and send us money. But, I could never get Roger to sit down long enough to write a newsletter. I mean, Roger was like a Ping-Pong ball. I mean, he was just goin' eighteen directions at once, and I never could get him settled down, so I had to sit down and write all those people and send all their money back to them."

"Oh really?"

"Yeah, so that took a ton of time, too." A hint of exhaustion crept into his voice. "We had a huge box of applications for that club, and mostly from kids, you know."

"I see. So he was undisciplined, it sounds like."

"Absolutely. He could be so fantastically disciplined it would just amaze you—when he was focused on something he could do. Then he'd walk through a flooding river to get it done. But, boy, to get him to sit down and talk business or to write a newsletter, or even to reason with Roger, was a very difficult thing to do. He was excited about money, but he wasn't excited about doing the business. He was very sick at this time, too, and he was running panicky a little bit because of his illness as far as getting everything done that he wanted to get done."

Koelling remembered Patterson's little wagons (they were "beautiful work, artistic, incredible work," he said), and his Volkswagen van in which he carried his horses in sideways fashion.

"Him and some other guys," recalled Koelling, "built a town out between Ahtanum and Wiley City, a frontier town. They were going to use the recording studio and tie it into the town and make movies and stuff. They did a beautiful job. It was really an incredible little town. That was just Roger. He had a terrific mind for coming up with ideas, and he could talk people into, you know, putting dollars into it."

I asked Koelling about Jerry Merritt.

"I had long talks with Jerry. Roger introduced me to Jerry. Roger wanted us to all know one another. Roger was kind of a mastermind of the group. And he was sincere, he'd give it his full effort, but he couldn't stick with it long enough to make it go, or he didn't have initially realistic ideas about it. But the longer he lived, the longer he went on, the longer I knew him, the more determined he became. The more he learned about the abominable snowman, the more that's what he threw his efforts into."

Koelling's voice was now vibrant. He painted a heroic picture of Roger. "He went for it! And he and Bob Gimlin, they just stuck with it, they just kept going after it!"

He took a breath. "And then I got to meeting all of his friends and talking to 'em, and you know, Roger always wanted to bring all his buddies into everything that we were doing, which wasn't financially viable. But he wanted everybody that helped him to get a piece of the cake, you know, and there wasn't any cake. He thought they all had neat and unique personalities and ideas. Like Bob Gimlin. He liked to dress him up like an Indian because he had black hair, and I think Bob had a little bit of Indian blood in him, you know. Roger always thought that it made it sound more realistic if you have an Indian out helping you find the abominable snowman. Merritt's recording equipment was impressive, and they were going to do music. Roger also liked to play and sing. He and Jerry Merritt would talk and play music and sing. I'd go and listen. They were going to do music, you know, and bring in recording artists along with this town idea."

"That's interesting. Do you remember him making his own documentary movie during that time?

"No, I don't remember that."

"I think that was mentioned in the book, that he was making a documentary or something."

Koelling suddenly remembered: "Oh, I think he was workin' on it. That was a problem that we got into. We formed this company, Trail Blazer Research, Incorporated, and he was one of the officers in it naturally. But Roger used that, and . . . you know, forgive me for what I'm saying right now . . . but I had a pretty good reputation around town as far as my credit and my reputation and so on. And Roger played that up some, and he would go into a camera store and charge a bunch of camera equipment, expensive camera equipment. He bought it or leased it with an option to purchase. It was an expensive camera with tripods and stuff to go along with it. And then they would come after me to pay it, see. Because of Trail Blazer Research."

"Oh." I wasn't surprised. "He wasn't paying the bill for Trail Blazer?"

"But he was an officer, so they would sell him the stuff."

"They'd actually sell it to him?"

"Yeah."

"On credit?"

"But then they would come to me to pay for it," he said forlornly.

"Oh. And you ended up paying for it?"

"Yep. I finally told Roger I couldn't afford it anymore, and I cut it off. I don't know if they got their cameras back or not."

Poor Koelling, I thought. He had learned the hard way.

"And then he also went to a western clothing store there in town and did the same thing, outfitting himself handsomely in western clothes and—and—and left me with the bill."

"How big was the bill?"

"There was never anything dramatic. I mean, he was. . . . I—I have to give Roger credit. I mean, he was—he didn't—I mean, he didn't take. . . . Well, how do I put it? He wasn't extremely extravagant, but he always got the best. The thing about it was when I was struggling, trying to put this book together, do the mailings and the advertising and all that, I just didn't have a lot of cash left laying around to, you know, outfit him the way he wanted to be outfitted with cameras and clothes. And I did agree to a certain amount. I told him, 'One outfit,' on the clothes, because I thought it was smart when he went to these interviews and the book signings and stuff that he didn't look like he had been wrung through a rat hole. And he liked to dress in western clothes. My idea of an outfit wasn't what his was. It was two different things."

Trail Blazer Research, Inc., funded by Koelling. And Koelling was Patterson's pipeline to the money. It sounded like Patterson took Koelling to the cleaners.

"How many of these book signings did he go to?" I asked.

"He must have went to about eight or ten of 'em."

"And how many people would show up?"

"Sometimes we had them standing in line. It was incredible, you know. And that was another problem we had. Roger liked to talk too much, and so somebody would come and start talking about the book. Well, he'd quit signing books, and people were standing around waiting, and they would lay the books down and go home, you know, because they got tired of waitin' for him. So then the book store manager would call me and say, 'Wait a minute, we're here to sell books, not talk.' So I'd have to get Roger aside and say, 'Come on Roger, sign books.' That's the thing. Roger was so focused on it, but yet he just didn't seem to realize that we had to make money at it, you know."

Right. Patterson wanted to make money the easy way, in my opinion. "Sounds like he was a pretty verbal person," I commented.

"Absolutely. Boy, he loved to get on TV. There used to be a show in L.A., the *Joe Pine Show*. We even got him on that show. Joe Pine called out of the blue and wanted Roger to come down, but Joe Pine wouldn't pay Roger's way. I said this was too big to miss. So I paid Roger's way down. That was another time we had to have the western clothes and all. He went down and did an interview with them, and they put it on the air, and it covered all the Western states I believe. And we thought that was really gonna help us, too. But again, for some reason, we just didn't get the information on the show we needed for people to get in touch with us, you know, and so. . . ."

Roger went on the *Joe Pine Show*, Koelling guessed, in late winter 1967.

I said, "So 1967 was a big year for his book and for the Roger Patterson name?"

"Right."

Koelling explained that the book signings took place in Spokane, Yakima, and the Tri-Cities. "I blew it in Seattle," Koelling said sadly. "If I would have played the game right, I think we may have made it. But I went to the big book dealer in town, and he wouldn't see me. And so I just stomped into his office and told him, 'You're missing a bet. This sucker's selling all over, and, you know, we're getting front page.' And I says, 'I know I can get him in the *PI* [Seattle *Post Intelligencer*], or the [*Seattle*] *Times*,' so on and on. The guy listened to me and was very kind, even after my butting in on him like that, and I went home, and I just dropped the ball, because I didn't think he wanted any. Later on, I found out through someone else that he was surprised I hadn't called him back, because he was ready to order a few thousand copies from us. We would have really been in good shape. I misread him."

"So how were you surviving at this time?" I asked. "You were living on your own savings, and you didn't have a job yourself. You just threw yourself into this project for a year?"

"Yeah. I had come back, and I had been stationed in San Diego and had been hired by Merrill-Lynch. I was supposed to be a stock broker with them down there. I had a terrific opportunity, and I won't go into all the details of it. But for some stupid reason I decided I needed to come back to Yakima, and so I didn't take it. And I come back to Yakima and interviewed up here and was hired as a stockbroker and also with an insurance company and decided to go with the insurance company because they had a salary they would pay to help you get started, and when this came along, I just dropped it all and went for it."

"And the reason why?"

"I think, Roger was hot. Like I said, it was really three reasons. I thought he was. . . . It was a hot title, a hot subject. Number two was altruistic feelings towards his family. They were really hurtin' financially. I mean, *bad*. And then the third thing, I think, was because I liked Roger. I liked talking to him. I liked to listen to him, and I felt that somehow we could get this thing on the deal, it would put him where he wanted to be, too. I didn't want to be part of the big whing-ding. I went out with him and saw tracks and was involved in different things with him that way. But that wasn't my modus operandi. I wanted to just do the business and let him go out and be the hero. But I sincerely felt I could be of help to him. I felt that he was being screwed over frankly by the printer, and I thought that I could get that straightened out, and in the process, make myself some money and make him some money, and get Roger doing what he wanted to do."

A very noble cause, I thought.

"Did Roger ever do any good things for you?"

He thought. "Well, he was just a good friend. He wasn't a friend in the sense of giving me money or coming up and working on my place. He was just a neat guy."

"You then left to go back into the service. You did that in part because of financial reasons?"

"Yep."

"So, did you come back to Yakima after that?"

"Yep."

Koelling re-entered the military in June 1967. During Koelling's second tour in the military, he heard that Patterson had supposedly filmed a Bigfoot. "And what was your reaction to that news?" I asked.

"I was excited for him. I really was. I thought, 'Dog-gone-it here, that guy has stuck with it. He's went after it, done what he needed to do, he's done it!' And I was proud of him for stickin' with it. And I thought it was great, I really did."

"Did you have any doubt about what he had filmed?"

"Nope. Roger would tell you lots of times what you wanted to hear, but I always felt that between Roger and me that he was pretty straightforward. I mean he'd screwed up and go charge the cameras and stuff like that, but in the friendship of him and I working together, I always felt Roger was pretty straightforward and honest. I don't think Roger lied. I think sometimes he might have skewed the truth a little bit, but I don't think it was in the sense of a lie. This was just how he saw it."

Skewed the truth a little bit.

"I have no question about that movie," Koelling said confidently. "I don't think Roger put that on. I really do not. I've seen it probably ten times, and knowing Bob Gimlin, too, I really firmly believe that they saw the Bigfoot." Koelling often had lunch with Gimlin. "I liked Bob, too, he was a nice guy."

Koelling left the Navy in 1970 and returned to Yakima. In 1972 Koelling attended Patterson's funeral. "For some reason, the funeral is really, really foggy in my mind. I don't remember much of anything about it."

Then Koelling remembered something. He had leased a business office in the Larson Building in downtown Yakima where Roger generated "a million ideas" for products.

"A lot weren't worth pursuing," Koelling said. "Roger had a pretty inventive mind. The guy came up with an insulated canteen. Roger took an old Army canteen, and he found some insulating stuff and put around it. It was incredible! That was another reason we formed Trailblazer Research, Incorporated. I saw that there was a lot of money in that. You could put a cup of coffee in that thing and set it out in the middle of winter overnight, and the next morning it was still warm. Roger had tried a bunch of different kinds of insulation, you know. He would just keep working at it, working at it. He was trying to find a way, as I was, to bankroll his. . . . He wanted to get an expedition up and go after the Bigfoot. I mean, spend time out in the fields, photography, and he needed horses, he needed trailers, he needed cameras, he needed wranglers, you know, food and all the other things that went with it. And we thought that this canteen might give us the opportunity to do that. In fact, we had a guy up in Spokane who was going to extrude the plastic bottles for us to put the insulation in around. Then Goodrich or Goodyear, one of the two down in Colorado . . . we were negotiating with them at the time to put this canteen together for us. Some wholesale outfit back East had found out and ordered dozens and dozens and dozens of 'em from us. But I could never get the seed capital to put it all together. I was running out of money, and I was running out of time. I was getting close to where I was going to lose everything. It just caved in. That's when I went back into the service and just dropped the whole thing."

It had started with Patterson's book. It ended with bankruptcy.

In 1979, Koelling was contacted by Rene Dahinden who subsequently bought the book copyright from him for $500. "Because at that time, I didn't care. I knew it wasn't going to go anywhere anyway, so he bought it."

I asked Koelling for his final thoughts about Patterson.

"Well, I still like the guy. I still think it was tragic that he died the way he did. He was a lot into health food stuff. He would go to the places where they would give him enemas. He was into anything he thought would help him. He mixed a lot of his own juices and drank those. He didn't have a lot of trust in the medical profession. He felt they weren't doing what they were supposed to do. It seems to me he was getting some radiation treatments 'cause I remember burns on his neck. And he was the kind of guy who'd get up every morning and go at it. I mean, he didn't lay around feeling sorry for himself. He got up every morning and went at it no matter how he felt. Yeah, a real fighter. I mean he was, all his life, he was that way, and he carried right through 'til the end. He also got mixed up with his brother-in-law, and I cannot remember his name either, but he was the one that put that movie together, and they put it into theaters and sold tickets for it, and that's where Roger got his bucks to go to Thailand and some other places looking at their stories there, the yeti and so on. I don't think you could get into China. But it was my understanding—and I have zero proof of this—but it was my understanding that his brother-in-law made quite a bit of money off that movie. And Roger didn't get his share of it. That's something you might want to pursue."

"Did anyone tell you that in particular?"

"Well, several people I knew told me. And Roger told me, and several other people told me, too, you know, that I trust."

"Can you name those people?"

"I cannot. And if I could, I would. I don't remember who they were at the time."

"Any other thoughts?" I asked.

"Yes. Roger was a very controlling person. He liked to control the conversation. He didn't like listening. Several times I told him, 'Roger, you're gonna have to listen whether you want to or not. Because we've *got* to get this taken care of.' But he liked to talk. He just loved it. He talked about Bigfoot 90 percent of the time. And Roger thought I had more money than I did. I coughed up quite a bit of money right at the beginning, and I think he thought it was an endless hole I had. I don't think he went out and spent the money thinking I couldn't pay for it. But he didn't come and talk to me and say, 'Can I do this?' I got calls from people wanting Roger to pay his bills. I told them, 'Hey, that's not my business.' Roger wasn't paying his utility bills, stuff like that. I liked Patty Patterson. I'd pay these kinds of things, or help her with them. My money went fast, but I got them through the winter of 1966–67. I've got to be honest with you. I got interested in this to make bucks, you know. The more I was around Roger, the more he convinced me."

Koelling had talked a long time, practically a monologue. After swapping a few more impressions of Patterson, I thanked him, and we both said good-bye.

As I removed the cassette tape from the recorder, I was struck by how eternally optimistic Koelling had sounded, smiling even as Patterson's undisciplined pursuit of money devoured Koelling's life savings. To me, Koelling had put the best face he could on a bad experience. I slipped the tape in a folder.

Well, I thought, Koelling had a great deal of sympathy for Patterson, what with his cancer and his poverty; but from my vantage point Koelling had served a clear and obvious purpose in Patterson's life. Patterson may have been sincere in pursuing his dreams (Bigfoot, inventions) and yes, he had expended a lot of his own personal energy on those dreams, but Koelling was just one more stepping stone. Without Koelling, Patterson could have never published his book, and without his book, he couldn't have gained the publicity he desperately sought.

Out of curiosity, I asked the Archives and Records Management Division in the Secretary of State's Office in Olympia to search for incorporation papers on Trail Blazer Research. A week later I anxiously opened an envelope mailed to me from the archives division. A copy of the articles of incorporation were enclosed. They had been filed on December 2, 1966, and the company had been located at 118 East Yakima Avenue. Glen Koelling was the president; Edward Cassidy, owner of Franklin Press, was the vice president; and Marilyn Koelling was the secretary-treasurer. Koelling held two hundred fifty-five shares, Cassidy five, and Marilyn Koelling five. Each share was valued at $100 each. Thus, the company's operating capital was $26,500. In 1966 dollars, that must have been quite a bit of money. I found it amusing that Cassidy, who apparently had lost money on Patterson's book, had bought shares in the company, whose very funds were ultimately depleted by Patterson! By 1973, the year after Patterson died, the company was out of business.

Patterson should be so lucky he met Koelling, I reflected, and I filed the articles of incorporation with the Koelling tape.

It seemed to me that Patterson made his way through life on the coattails of others, looking for easy marks, for people who felt sorry for him, or who were willing to carry him along. But to be fair, it was a two-way transaction. Starry-eyed investors thought they could become millionaires, if only they were willing to invest in and tolerate Roger Patterson. These unfortunate people were willing victims, and the deeper they got involved with the wild-eyed, little Bigfoot hunter, the more cursed they became, the more they suffered, and the more they lost.

Then on January 30, 1999, the bombshell hit.

13

MAC MACENTIRE

[W]hen scientists started saying it was real, I started thinking, "My God, what have we done?"

—**Mac MacEntire**

On January 30, 1999, I routinely logged onto my computer to check out the e-mail traffic on a Bigfoot list I had subscribed to a few months earlier. The list was a useful tool for mining little nuggets about the Patterson film and monitoring the Bigfoot field, although nothing startling ever emerged. In fact, the list had been bogged down for weeks with the question, "Should I kill or not kill a Bigfoot to prove its existence?" However, this night a message posted to the group caught my immediate attention. It read: "I live in Yakima. If you would like to read the newspaper article on the so-called hoax, you can by going to Yakima-Herald.com." I clicked on the link and up popped the home page of the *Yakima Herald*. The headline below the masthead grabbed me by the throat: "Bigfoot Unzipped—Man Claims It Was Him in a Suit."[1]

I yelled for Pat in the next room. She ran into the study, and we hunched in front of the screen in our chairs and read: "Friends and acquaintances of Yakima's famed Sasquatch hunter say the film that for three decades has stood as a paranormal icon to the existence of Bigfoot is actually nothing more than a Big Joke."

The reporter, David Wasson, went on to quote a Yakima resident: "'This nonsense has got to stop,' said Mac MacEntire, a retired salesman from Yakima who remembers Bigfoot expert Roger Patterson and his partner, Bob Gimlin, laughing about the international uproar their grainy 1967 film created. 'You see all these scientists talking about how the creature in that film had to be real, and it just makes me want to puke.'"

Then my heart jumped as Wasson abruptly changed the topic: "Zillah attorney Barry M. Woodard confirmed Friday he's representing a Yakima man who says he wore the elaborate monkey suit in the Patterson-Gimlin film, and that his client has passed a lie-detector test to prove it." Woodard said that his fifty-eight-year-old client had approached him a few months previously "after a network news program [Fox Television's *World's Greatest Hoaxes: Secrets Finally Revealed*, produced by Robert Kiviat, President of Kiviat Productions, Inc.] called questioning the authenticity of the 1967 film. The man wanted help negotiating a deal for rights to his story, Woodard said Friday, as well as to explore any legal issues he might face as a result of his involvement in the hoax."

"*Bob Heironimus*!" I shouted, turning to look at Pat. Her hazel eyes were bright with curiosity.

Woodard, I thought silently, had to be representing Heironimus. I knew that Heironimus was fifty-eight years old, and he had referred me to Woodard. I was overcome with a confusing mixture of anger and excitement. "I uncovered him," I cried out. "I found him out, and now he's trying to make money. And he won't talk to me!" Eventually, I calmed down. I said resignedly, "Well, Pat, maybe the Bigfoot in Patterson's film *is* Heironimus. Maybe he did wear the suit like they've all be saying out in the Ahtanum Valley."

Her eyes were larger than usual. "I think he wore it. Why else did he get an attorney?"

"But what if all these Ahtanum Valley witnesses have bought into a lie? What if in 1967 somebody started a rumor that it was Heironimus in the suit, and everybody in the Ahtanum Valley has come to believe it? What if Heironimus heard this rumor, and he went along with it, and he's been waiting thirty-five years for the right moment to make money off the lie? We do know he participated in Patterson's film on the South Fork. We've got the photo to prove it. People might have said, 'Well, Heironimus hung around with Patterson. He must be the guy who wore the suit.' Maybe Heironimus is just taking advantage of Patterson's name."

"Honey." She gently touched my hand. "I think he's the one."

"Damn!" I clenched my jaws, furious at Heironimus. "If the film was a hoax done for money, here's Heironimus just carrying on the tradition more than thirty years later—to make money off the film. Bigfoot has nothing to do with science. It's all about money! Money, money, money!"

Seething, I forced myself to turn back to my screen and read more. Jim McCormick, a certified polygraph examiner, administered the lie detector test on the Man in the Suit, Wasson wrote. "Results of the 75-minute examination showed the man was telling the truth when asked about having worn the Bigfoot suit in the 1967 film." Patterson's widow Patricia declined to comment on the "Bigfoot unzipped" story, Wasson reported, and Bob Gimlin wasn't returning Wasson's phone calls.

Wasson went on to quote the former owner of the Chinook Press in Yakima, Bob Swanson, who printed ten thousand copies of Patterson's book but was never paid. I read out loud: "'With sluggish book sales and a large printing bill still unpaid, Yakima suddenly became a hotbed of Bigfoot activity,'" Swanson said with a chuckle. "'Sightings were being reported throughout the Yakima Valley, and Patterson was never far from the scene.'"

I faced Pat. "Didn't Glen Koelling say that Ed Cassidy, the owner of

Franklin Press, published Patterson's book? Maybe this Bob Swanson printed a second edition."

Wasson's story ended with a quote from Jerry Merritt: "'One thing I know for sure is Roger went to his grave convinced he'd seen Bigfoot.'"

"Well," I said as my printer hummed and the story rolled out, "I'm going to have to talk to MacEntire and Swanson. Here are two people actually going public with their memories of Patterson. But I'll call Wasson first while the story's hot." Pat began writing "Wasson" on a manila folder. "Maybe he can provide me some publicity to generate more leads."

A few days later I called Wasson.

"I've been flooded with phone calls," he said excitedly. "It's taking me forever to deal with them."

I explained my project to him, and I hinted that I knew who the Man in the Suit was.

"Well, I've talked to Al DeAtley," he said.

Startled, I paid close attention to Wasson's words.

"I'm going to be quoting him in another story I'm doing," he said.

"Really? I don't think DeAtley's ever talked to the press about the film."

"I've checked our files here and at Superior Court. It seems that DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin were in Los Angeles not long after the film was shot. They formed a company called Bigfoot Enterprises on November 1, 1967, with the help of a lawyer named Walter E. Hurst."

"I'll be!" I said. Merritt had told me that he and Patterson traveled to Los Angeles to have Hurst copyright the name "Bigfoot." That was some time in the summer of 1967 before the filming. Now here it was eleven days *after* the footage was shot and a third company devoted to Bigfoot had been formed. The other two were Northwest Research Association and Trail Blazer Research.

To whet Wasson's journalistic appetite, I dropped a few facts he didn't know and then told him I had circumstantial evidence that the film was a hoax. "Patterson was definitely into finding ways to make money," I said, then quickly appended, "But of course, where's the suit? The Bigfoot believers will never accept the film as a hoax if no suit is produced."

A few days later, on February 4, 1999, I heaved myself down in my chair and logged on to read Wasson's second story, "Bigfoot Believers Say Film No Fake." Part of the story focused on the reaction of Bigfoot believers to the Man in the Suit's claim. "The Man in the Suit was out to make money!" the Bigfooters shouted. There was no suit. And anyway, even if there was a suit, it would have to show the same "muscle structure" as the Bigfoot's in the film. And besides, Woodard's client was just too short, six feet, and it was well known, said eccentric Bigfooter Erik Beckjord, Patterson's Bigfoot was more than seven feet tall.

Scrolling down, I read DeAtley's statements. DeAtley didn't dispute his role in Bigfoot Enterprises, but he told Wasson, "The only thing I did was to loan Roger money. I took an [ownership] interest to secure that debt."

In other words, to make certain that he would get his money back, he became a partner in Bigfoot Enterprises. DeAtley told Wasson that he had loaned money to Patterson before to "launch other business enterprises as well. . . . [He] wrote off the unpaid loan and gave his share in Bigfoot Enterprises to his brother-in-law in 1970, when Roger Patterson was diagnosed with cancer."

Wasson continued: "Asked whether he ever questioned the authenticity of the 1967 Bigfoot film, DeAtley said he purposely avoided the subject. 'I never asked,' he said, 'because I didn't want to know.'"

Didn't want to know! The statement astounded me. It suggested that DeAtley suspected a hoax, but he simply turned a blind eye when it came to his promoting the film.

Continuing on, the story touched on Bob Gimlin who, Wasson reported, in 1975 sued DeAtley and Patty Patterson for his rightful share in the film's proceeds. Gimlin, as well as Patty Patterson, Wasson noted, again declined any comment on this second Patterson story. At the end of the story, Wasson gave my book project brief mention. I could see that I had gone out on a limb when he quoted me: "This whole thing was a money-making venture for him [Patterson] from the beginning." Now that I had made a public statement that Patterson's interest in Bigfoot was rooted in money, not science, I wondered if potential witnesses who had personal information about Patterson would scatter.

Well, it didn't matter, I thought; there was no doubt that the film was certainly all about money. Once Patterson shot the Bluff Creek footage, the cash began rolling in.

As I was printing off the news story, I thought, This is all very interesting. DeAtley is breaking his silence, but he seems to be distancing himself from Patterson: *"I never asked because I didn't want to know. The only thing I did was to loan Roger money."*

I would have to try to talk to DeAtley, and soon. I was convinced that the "business mogul," to quote Wasson, was trying to give the proper spin to his involvement in the film. Perhaps he'd like to tell me his story the way he'd like me to hear it. But first I needed to talk to Mac MacEntire and Bob Swanson while Patterson was fresh on their minds.

Pecking through the on-line directory, I found a Jack MacEntire. He liked to call himself "Mac," I learned when he accepted my phone call. As he began to talk, I recognized a familiar down-home drawl I had come to expect from many Yakima residents. This night, his falsetto voice was brimming with anger. "Roger Patterson had an ego bigger than his body!" he said spitefully. "He was in extremely good condition even though he had cancer. He lived longer than expected because of the way he fought it. That's the only good thing I can say about Roger Patterson. Otherwise, he was *a total liar*."

Well, I took in a breath. Here was some beginning to the interview.

MacEntire was sixty-one, he told me. He had moved to Yakima in 1962, and in 1963 started working downtown as a salesman for Montgomery Ward selling appliances on commission. He was awarded plaques for best salesman. "I was a real good commission salesman," he said with pride. "I also worked for Sears."

MacEntire brought up the story of Glen Koelling, who he remembered left the service and bought a ranch in Yakima. Koelling and Koelling's brother Reese were close friends of MacEntire.

"Glen and his wife were living real comfortable," MacEntire said. But that all changed when Koelling met Patterson. By the time Patterson was through with him, the ex-military flyer was, according to MacEntire, "flat broke."

"Glen got the shaft," MacEntire sniffed. "He believed Patterson. Everything Glen had, he hocked it. He had money, he had a ranch, he was doing good. He didn't need this folly, and Patterson used him like he was an idiot."

I let MacEntire vent. I sensed that he lived alone, and he had a lot to get off his chest. He had never been formally introduced to Patterson, but MacEntire knew who he was, oh yes. He remembered seeing Patterson in an office in the Larson Building with Koelling, an office that Koelling was paying for. According to MacEntire, Koelling was also paying for "T-shirts, and books, and all kinds of stuff" related to Bigfoot. The office atmosphere was like the beginning of a campaign, MacEntire recalled. "It was like you were sitting at a football game waiting for the team to come out of the locker room. That's the feeling I got. You're sitting there waiting for the rocket to go off."

MacEntire visited the office at least twice. One time, Patterson's VW van was parked in the alley across from the building. "I remember I went up to say 'Hi' to Glen. He was a buddy of mine. Roger could care less if I was there. He acted like he wanted to see the president, or somebody. He didn't turn around and say, 'Hey, Mac, how're you doin'?' He was very focused on *himself*."

MacEntire exhaled and collected himself. "I've got to tell the truth. I'm not going to lie to you. The thing of it was, Roger Patterson was such a small man that his ego got *so big* he was trying to promote his ego. And his size as a man had bothered him *so much* that everything he focused in his life was Roger Patterson, to make himself big. He walked around like he was probably 6'8". He could never be a big man physically, so mentally, in his mind, I think he *was* a big man."

"He wanted to be a celebrity?"

"This is the whole thing from the start."

It was through Koelling that MacEntire came to know a lot about Patterson. One day Glen said to MacEntire: "'The guy's nothing but a scab. He's ruining me! Everything's down the tube.'"

I could see MacEntire admired Koelling. He said, "Glen Koelling is the one who *really* put the wheels under Roger. Because without the money, Roger couldn't move one way or the other. And so he fleeced Glen Koelling, that's all there is to it. Patterson made excuses: 'I'm the one who's out there doing all the hustling.' Glen goes, 'Oh, yeah, I'll pay the bills. No problem.' In other words, 'Glen, you stay home, I'll go out and do it.' This was his ego. Nobody could do it except Patterson."

In 1966, the year before Patterson's Bigfoot film, MacEntire was twenty-nine years old. He spent a lot of time partying then. Among his friends were the Thompson brothers, the sons of Phyllis and Chuck Thompson. Phyllis was the oldest Patterson sister; Iva, the youngest, had married Al DeAtley.

"We were all wild and crazy. We were all in the same group. I'd be at a friend's house one night. He'd be at my house the next night. Viale Thompson and I played ball together, ran together, drank together. We were just a crazy bunch of wild people."

I pictured MacEntire and a group of young men and women staggering from bar to bar, from house to house, in the untamed sixties. Vietnam was raging. Young men and women were growing their hair long. The sickly sweet odor of marijuana was in the air. It was all rebellion, all uncontrolled change. Even little ol' Yakima must have felt it. Or maybe it was just the age-old phenomenon of youth, carousing and sowing one's wild oats.

Then, suddenly, Roger Patterson filmed a Bigfoot. At the time, it didn't mean anything to MacEntire. "I thought it was a joke, that's all. But when scientists started saying it was real, I started thinking, 'My God, what have we done?' You know, not what *we* have done, but I'm part of it because I wouldn't tell anybody nothin'." He said remorsefully, "I never said *nothin'*."

After Patterson publicized his footage, MacEntire remembered that Roger accepted fees from magazines who sent him on Bigfoot hunts. "He wrote magazine companies. He'd get a check, and away he goes. He'd send back a few pictures that he was there. He might just go over there and take a pee and drink some tequila and come home. And he comes back, and he's on another scam. And it was a constant scam."

"I've been digging up all kinds of bits and pieces about Patterson," I interjected to break MacEntire's tirade.

He snorted. "When you add them all up, he's just a horse's hind end. He was always living off of other people. I think he called it 'livin' off his wits.' I never knew him to work. He was a self-promoter, but he lived off other people. He was a leech."

He admitted that when David Wasson called him, he spoke out for the first time in his life about Patterson. "I had to tell the truth because I'm a Christian. I've been wild and crazy, believe me. And I try to be the best man I can now, a grandpa. Going along with a *long, long lie* isn't showing people how to live right. When I see something on TV, I like to know it's the truth. If it's going to be funny, I want someone to say, 'Hey, this is funny now. This is not the truth. This is not a real story.' When kids believe a false story, and they take it as the real truth, I feel a responsibility. I'm doing wrong. And I'm not going to do it anymore."

His biggest mistake, he said shamefully, was that as he partied with his friends, he ignored Patterson's antics. "I wish I would have said, 'Stop it!'"

At those parties when talk of Patterson's film started, someone would boast, "I was in that outfit!" Or, "Man, can you believe it! Patterson made those suckers believe so-and-so!"

I could hear disgust twitching in MacEntire's craw. "Roger kept trying to build this thing off of other people's support, people who he had screwed. He kept trying to build this thing, and build this thing, and build this thing. Roger Patterson's name and Bigfoot were the only thing that mattered to Roger Patterson. That was the ultimate. Roger Patterson wanted all the glory, everything. He jumped on this thing, and he rode it."

The problem, MacEntire said, was that "we believe scientists. . . . We listen to lawyers, judges." Scientists, he remembered, would talk about the "fluid motion" of Patterson's Bigfoot, and "[S]omebody back in New York was writing about Roger Patterson and this *stupid ape!"*

MacEntire was breathing hard and fast. He seemed to have said his piece, so I asked him for his final thoughts about Patterson.

"Well, a little man who I admire for his strength, but I despise the deceiving he did. . . . I assume part of the blame. It was funny back then, a big joke. Now it's become very serious. You don't sit up and lie to America, in fact the whole world. I want it to end. I just live here alone with my English bulldog. My grandkids visit me. I'm a disabled veteran. I have a bone marrow problem. It's terminal. Life's been good to me."

Silence fell between us. Mac MacEntire was dying. I didn't know what to say. Finally, I lamely offered, "I'm very sorry to hear that." We discussed a few more items, and I thanked him for the interview and gently placed the handset in its cradle.

I sat alone for a long time. It was raining again, as it nearly always is in the Northwest, and I heard a low, moaning wind rattling the panes. I pictured Mac MacEntire far away on the other side of the dark Cascades in a little house somewhere in Yakima.

Out in the living room Pat was knitting a pair of slippers for a grandchild. I sat on the sofa and summarized the interview. "He's a dying man. He told me it without faltering and with a calm resignation. He didn't sound bitter about life. When it came to Roger Patterson, he seemed totally honest, making a final accounting, setting things right with the Lord."

Pat's eyes clouded over. "I'm sorry."

I returned to the den and removed the cassette from the recorder. I labeled the folder "MacEntire." I found it difficult to write the words. He was dying from cancer as Patterson had died. I felt sad for MacEntire. I felt sad for Patterson, too. But the nature of MacEntire's tragedy was different from Patterson's, it seemed to me. It was all a matter of character, a matter of honesty, integrity, how one lives his or her life. That made all the difference.

I placed my notes of the interview in MacEntire's folder and slipped it between others in a box rapidly filling with folders. Finished for the night, I turned off the light in the study. The wind wailed outside.

"Honey, I'm going to bed," I called down the dark hallway.

As I sat on the edge of the bed, tears came to my eyes for Mac MacEntire. I broke into a sob, and I had never even seen him.

NOTE

1. David Wasson, "Bigfoot Unzipped—Man Claims It Was Him in a Suit" [online], http://yakima-herald.com [January 30, 1999].

14

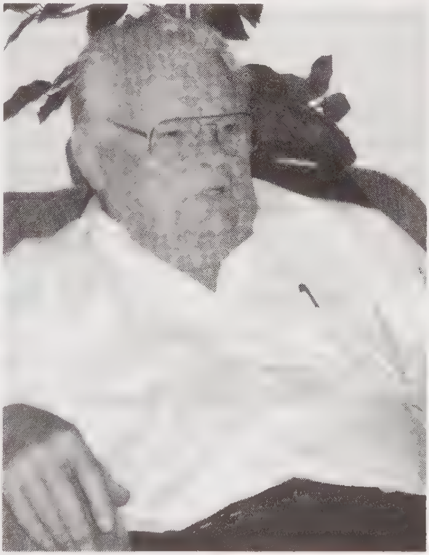
BOB SWANSON

***Oh, Patterson was a master,* a real master!**

—Bob Swanson

Pat and I drove into the trailer park where we had come to interview Bob Swanson, former owner of Chinook Press in Yakima. Swanson was retired and living with his wife, June, in Federal Way, just north of Tacoma. David Wasson of the *Yakima Herald* had reported that Swanson had printed *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* He also reported that Patterson had never paid Swanson.

A ruddy-faced, genial Bob Swanson welcomed us at the screen door and waved us warmly inside. A slight, birdlike woman with hard-edged lines in her face greeted us from her perch on an easy chair, her feet propped on a footrest. Several common-looking but colorful still lifes, seascapes, and hand-stitched pictures decorated the walls. Big-boned and on the heavy side, Swanson had the face of both a football player and a businessman, strong and hefty, with a high, broad forehead and distinguished silver hair. His large, metallic glasses gave him a serious appearance, but behind the imposing lenses, gleamed warmth and candor. Swanson's threadbare recliner, into which he now lowered himself, and the



Bob Swanson printed Roger Patterson's book. Patterson never paid Swanson. Photo by Pat Long.

well-worn carpet under his feet, suggested a man of unpretentious means and uncaring retirement.

I carefully lodged myself into a rocking chair facing Swanson, the tender wood creaking ominously under me. I outlined the objectives of my project. He nodded, and I punched on the recorder.

Swanson was seventy-one and a native of Yakima. He tried college but never graduated. Instead, he said, "I wanted to have fun." In 1950 at age twenty-one he entered the printing business and worked for Yakima Bindery until 1963 when he opened his own lithographic print shop, Chinook Press, on North First Street and I Street. He, June, and two pressmen comprised the little business.

"You know, we were the first publisher of Roger Patterson's book," Swanson informed me.

"And I think this is it," I said and removed my copy from my briefcase.

Swanson's thick fingers gently took hold of the book, and he examined it like a rare art object. "Yes, this looks like it. Yes." He smiled fondly as he slowly turned the pages with his large thumb. He brought the book closer and inspected the cover with his printer's eye. "The cover of the one I printed had some yellow, I remember that. Robbie, my third son, has a copy of the book in Alaska. Yes." He continued to turn the pages slowly. "Instead of a signature with saddle stitching, we did it in eight-page signatures just like this one. Yes, I remember the day Patterson came into our shop."

Swanson placed the book on the end of the sofa next to him. He lightly touched the fingertips of his two hands together. "He came in and he wanted us to do a little flyer on a toy. If I remember right, it was the old fashioned hoop and stick—a stick with a hoop. We thought it was awful funny somebody would try to promote something like that. We didn't realize we were being set up. Well, we printed the flyer."

I remembered Merritt's description of Patterson pushing the hoop down Sunset Boulevard. "Was it a *photo* of a hoop and stick?"

"As far as I remember, it was a *drawing* of a hoop and a stick. He probably came by a week later, and he paid for it. He set up a good front. He was a little short guy, and I can't remember if he had his ten-gallon hat or not." He grinned. "And, oh, maybe two or three weeks later, he brought in this suitcase, which was the sweetest thing you've ever seen."

A boyish smile crossed his lips. "Patterson said, 'I know you're busy. You haven't got time to look at it now. But I'm going to leave this. I want you to look at it, and I'll be back.' The briefcase was like yours, a large square thing."

Swanson chuckled. "Well, naturally, the minute he went out the door, we had to open the briefcase. And here was this big, eighteen-inch plaster foot and an *Argosy* magazine. And. . . ." He screwed his eyes up, trying to recollect. "And something about *True Adventures* or something. And *Boy's Life*. And they all had articles about Bigfoot. I could hardly wait for him to come back—because I was *sold!*"

"But I couldn't unsell him," June cawed from the other side of the lamp that separated the couple.

"There had to be a Bigfoot, and Patterson was the man!" Swanson smiled.

"What did the cast look like?" I asked.

"Hmm. I remember it was big and heavy. I took it out and held it and looked at it. I had never heard of Bigfoot before. All I knew about it I just read right there in those three magazines. Intriguing."

"What were you imagining as you read those articles?"

"Just like everybody else, you look behind every bush. Just automatic—'He's around somewhere.'" He laughed.

"So you began to believe in the possibility that there was a Bigfoot?"

"Yes," he said. He remembered his state of mind shortly after looking at the items in Patterson's briefcase. It was summer, and Swanson went camping in the woods with a kids' baseball team sponsored by his print shop. "The whole time up there, I was thinking, 'I wonder if we're being watched.' Oh, your imagination is just vivid! You know there's *something* out there somewhere, and every stick that breaks and everything you hear—oh, Patterson was a master, *a real master!"*

A week after dropping off the briefcase, Patterson returned. "He wanted to write a book. He wanted to know if we'd print it. I suppose he chose us because we were the smallest shop in town. Hah!" He laughed cynically. "I don't know. But he decided we would print it."

Swanson picked up Patterson's book off the sofa. "And he was going to write it, and he wanted to do all the artwork—those are probably all his drawings," he said as he nodded at several of Patterson's ink cartoons, "and I don't know, I don't remember, I suppose we just started."

June typeset the book as Patterson brought in pieces of the manuscript week after week. He gave her his drawings as he finished them. It took about a month for Patterson to finish his work.

"I didn't like him!" snapped June. I looked at her. She had a wrinkled face and a sharp-looking nose. Her mouth was turned down in disgust.

"When he came to the shop," Swanson said, "he usually spent time with our pressman."

The pressman came into the shop one morning about 7:00. His early arrival was unusual since the pressman never came before 8:00, and even then he was never on time. The pressman was excited. "'Have you heard the news on KIT radio!'" he blurted. "'A Bigfoot has been seen in the West Valley!'"

This was news to Swanson. He felt he would have heard this news since he'd been listening to KIT ever since he'd come to work that morning.

After the pressman left the shop to have breakfast, Swanson picked up the phone. "It was about eight o'clock when I called KIT. I asked about the story, what I had missed on the radio. I was told, 'How did you know about that? We haven't put it on yet!'"

Swanson began to suspect that his pressman had something to do with the

Bigfoot sighting in the West Valley. Why else would he have announced the news to Swanson *before* it was publicly broadcast? Besides, whenever Patterson came into the shop with pieces of his book, the Bigfoot hunter usually spent a lot of time talking to the pressman at the back of the shop. "Patterson spent *a lot* of time back there. Then Patterson would leave."

The Bigfoot sighting in the West Valley occurred after Patterson's book had been printed. In fact, it happened the night *before* Patterson was scheduled to sign copies of his book at the Bon Marché, an expensive clothing store in Yakima. The pressman had informed Swanson about the upcoming book signing. Having taken a liking to Patterson, the pressman was keeping Swanson informed of Patterson's activities.

"I think the pressman wore a Bigfoot suit," Swanson said, with conviction.

Interesting, I thought. But unfortunately Swanson had no proof of the pressman's involvement in a hoax sighting. I wondered, Could Patterson have continuously talked up Bigfoot to the pressman to persuade him to provide some financial backing?

Swanson was beaming. I could see that he was enjoying the interview and that he found Bigfoot and his experience with Patterson quite humorous now that thirty-five years had passed.

"Now, after you printed the book, did Patterson come by and pick them up?" I asked.

"I can't remember. He probably came by, and we put the boxes in his car." He paused, thinking. "I think he had a tiny Volkswagen bug, and he took the back seat out."

"I know he had a Volkswagen *van*," I said. "Could this have been a van?"

"No, it was a bug. For some reason, my memory tells me he had rented it." In any event, Patterson never paid for the printing. "In those days you mailed bills to customers. You trusted everybody. He was one of the few who didn't pay."

Swanson delayed tracking down Patterson until many months later. Normally, he gave his customers thirty days, even up to sixty days to settle their bills, but then Swanson began talking to Floyd Paxton, a wealthy businessman in town who owned the company Kwik Lok, and Swanson's concern about Patterson diminished.

Paxton was a multimillionaire inventor. "The guy was a genius," Swanson said. Paxton had built an empire by starting out building and repairing apple box–making machines to support the apple growers in the Yakima Valley. Swanson got to know Paxton when Swanson's father, a fruit rancher, began visiting Paxton to use one of Paxton's box machines to make apple boxes. Later, Paxton invented a machine that wraps plastic around loaves of bread and attaches a plastic clip to them. Ah! John Green had mentioned to me Patterson's dubious claim that he had invented the plastic bread clip. So it was Paxton who was the real inventor. It appeared that Patterson was a liar.

Paxton vouched for Patterson. "Floyd and I saw eye to eye on many things," Swanson remembered. "We often had lunch together and discussed politics." If Paxton thought well of Patterson, then Patterson must be all right, Swanson concluded.

Paxton has since died, but Paxton's heirs owned a huge factory near the Yakima Airport. It was over lunch one day in the fall of 1966 that Swanson discovered that Paxton supported Patterson. "At this time, there was lots of talk about Bigfoot. Everybody was talking about it. June and I were involved with just about everything in town, and it [Bigfoot] was a big thing." When Swanson mentioned Patterson's delinquency in paying his printing bill, Paxton told Swanson not to be concerned. "I figured, well, if Floyd thinks he's OK, well, he's OK. Paxton thought Patterson really had something."

Soon Paxton persuaded Swanson to pay for promoting Patterson's book. Swanson agreed and used the artwork from the book cover and his typesetting equipment to create an advertisement, gratis. Paxton himself spent, Swanson guessed, about $850 to place the ad in *Boy's Life*. Both conservative businessmen had been caught up in Patterson's obsession

"It sounds like Patterson sold Paxton on his ideas," I volunteered.

"I suppose," Swanson grunted.

"Eight-hundred and fifty dollars for the ad," I said. "That's quite a bit of money in 1966."

"Yeah," he agreed.

"And you donated your time to the ad."

"Yeah. Then the letters started coming in from people wanting to buy the book. Maybe that's when he took the back seats out of the Volkswagen." He remembered Patterson driving up to the shop one day, and in the back of the VW bug, missing a back seat, sat large, gray canvas bags filled with letters.

June said, "The money and the letters were laying there, half of them open, in the back of that car."

"That's right," Swanson said. "Patterson was throwing all the envelopes with checks back in the car and just taking the money, because the checks had to clear, and he didn't have a bank account. I can't remember. . . . He couldn't *get* a bank account?" He squinted, trying to dredge up the exact picture. "Something about the checks. He didn't want the checks. And, uh, he didn't want to open an account because people would find him, I guess."

Swanson leaned back and laid his head against the headrest of the chair. He ruminated and then said, "If I remember correctly, he had already opened the letters before he drove up. After we delivered the books or he picked them up, he was very difficult to find. We couldn't get paid, and we couldn't find him. He was just *gone!*" He smirked.

Swanson mailed several invoices to Patterson, but he never responded. "I finally said to June, 'We've got to get paid.'"

"So we turned it over to a collection agency," she said, "and *they* just laughed."

"Yeah. They said, 'We'll just put it in the file with all the rest of them. But don't count on anything, because he owns nothing. There's nothing to attach.'" He laughed uproariously.

"'Nothing to attach'?" I asked.

"Right. He didn't own anything. He had the VW bug. We tried to attach that. 'Oh, we'll get the car,' we thought. Just can't do it. It's rented, and the rental isn't paid."

"How much did he owe you?"

"Oh, I don't remember exactly. Maybe a couple thousand dollars."

"That was quite a bit in those days."

"Oh, yes."

"Do you mind if we take your picture? I hope to publish photos of people I'm interviewing. That way readers will know I talked to actual, living people, and that I didn't make any of this up." He stared at me, puzzled.

"You see, people will think that I made these stories up," I explained.

"Sure. You can take my picture."

Pat drifted about the small living room, taking photos from various angles.

Time went by, and Patterson's bill still remained unpaid. "Then a friend of mine in Spokane called me one day. He said, 'I hear Roger's giving a talk tomorrow night at Gonzaga [University]. They're paying him fifteen hundred dollars. I know how we can get in there and get in the back in a hurry, and we can nail him.'" His lips parted into a wide smile. "We had this thing planned out *so beautiful*! We're going to nail that little scum, and—hah! After he got off the podium, we found out he just disappeared, that he collects [his speaking fees] in advance. We were thinking we'd be there when he gets his check, and we'd take it. And, oh, what a slick little piece of garbage he was." With his elbows on the armrests, he interlocked his fingers and tapped together the knobs of his thumbs. Amusement glinted in his eyes.

The silver-white photo flashes brightened the reddish tint in Swanson's face.

"As soon as he was through, we ran down the aisle and through the curtain, and he was gone. Somebody said, 'Well, he left.' I said, 'He couldn't have left because he was right here!'"

"You must have been really angry and disgusted."

"Yeah, you're very disappointed and disgusted, but you never really got . . ." He considered for a moment. "Because he took everybody. *Everybody.* You couldn't talk to anybody [and hear], 'Well, he paid me.' You never heard that from anyone."

"So you heard stories of other people?"

"Lord, yes! But then it ceases to be an amazement after awhile because Roger made a point of owning . . . *nothing.*"

"Can you remember anyone else who wasn't paid?" Before he answered, I flipped the tape to side B.

"Well, there was Ed Cassidy."

Glen Koelling had mentioned Cassidy, who was the owner of Franklin Press and had also printed Patterson's book, apparently the second edition. Koelling had ended up paying Patterson's bill for that edition.

"Well, Cassidy called me after he had printed the book," Swanson said. "He says, 'I've got a thousand books here'—or maybe it was ten thousand. Anyway, he says, 'I have to know how this guy paid [you].' I says, 'Well, he didn't.' Cassidy says, 'Well, how much did he pay?' I says, 'He never paid a dime.' He says, 'Oh, boy! I was about to ship these out. I'll ship them out as he pays for them.'" Swanson pursed his lips. "So that's probably when Patterson got a-hold of this fellow you're talking about [Cassidy] to pay for some so they could fill some of the orders. See, orders were still coming in on that ad."

Cassidy's role in Patterson's Bigfoot promotions was puzzling. Patterson's refusal or inability to pay Cassidy for the copies of his books didn't stop Cassidy from becoming involved with Patterson. Cassidy did become a stockholder of Trail Blazer Research, buying five shares at one hundred dollars a share.

I described Trail Blazer Research to Swanson. "Why do you think Cassidy joined Trail Blazer Research when Patterson never paid him?"

"I imagine he took stock instead of money," Swanson offered.

Well, it was one way to get money from your customer, I thought. Or was this just another instance of a local businessman, like Floyd Paxton or DeAtley, thinking he could get rich off of Patterson?

"Patterson conned everybody!" June shouted. "Floyd Paxton was a very, very intelligent man, and Patterson still conned him!" She said that Paxton had supplied horses and saddles for Patterson to use for publicity shots. "Patterson took the credit. I remember this. Those horses were all Paxton's," she said sourly.

"Oh, yeah," said Swanson, a sly grin on his face. "I think there was a photo in the last page of the book with Roger and his rifle."

I wasn't familiar with the photo; it wasn't in my edition of the book, which Rene Dahinden had printed.

"In the photo, Patterson had a rifle, chaps, a big hat," Swanson said. "All those came from a western store. The camera was from Sheppard's Camera Shop. I remember talking to Mrs. Sheppard about that. The rifle was from Harvey Anderson's Gun Shop. And then Floyd Paxton admitted it was his horse and saddle. We wondered about Patterson's skivvies! Ha, ha! The whole town got in an uproar. Nobody didn't know about Roger."

"Were business people talking a lot about Patterson?" I asked.

"Roger was never a topic of conversation. He was just somebody *to avoid.*"

Unfortunately, Swanson hadn't managed to avoid Patterson and had lost money in the process. I wondered why Swanson had so quickly believed in the little Bigfoot hunter.

"I didn't have any interests *at all* in what Roger was doing. I don't hunt. I don't like it. Never wanted to, never will. I used to fish a little. I played baseball and football in college and high school. I never go out in the woods, except to enjoy it."

I suggested that perhaps it was the manner in which Patterson approached him that hooked him. "He left the suitcase," I reminded him. "He enticed you. It was a way to get you intrigued."

"Oh, yes," he said cheerily. "And it worked."

"Could it also be that, because the Bigfoot articles were published in *magazines*, Bigfoot seemed credible to you?"

"Oh, yes. We knew the articles were true."

"And you can't have a successful con unless you have a willing victim."

"Oh, yes," he readily concurred. "And I was willing."

"That's not a criticism of you," I said, suddenly aware that my pelvis bones were aching from the rock-hard seat of the rocking chair. "But you know, that's how a con works."

"The guy was good," he smiled. "He was very, very good."

"You were completely taken by Roger Patterson," June chirped in.

He looked over at her and nodded. "He really had me snowed."

"You read the articles, you saw the cast," I said. "Then Roger started coming in with his book. You were kind of a believer."

"Oh, yes, 100 percent."

"Do you think that when he started bringing in the book to be typeset, you were already a believer?"

"Oh, yes. You wanted to believe. It was a very romantic thing. You *wanted* to believe it."

"What part of your personality opened you up to this idea of Bigfoot?"

June answered. "Bob has always been good to people. He had a tendency to take people at their word and to trust them. He still does."

"And I'll never change. Ha, ha, ha, ha!" He burst into thunderous, good-humored laughter.

The interview was drawing to a close. I held the recorder closer for his final comments. "What was your reaction when you heard that Roger Patterson, the guy who didn't pay his bills, took a film of Bigfoot down in California?"

"I thought it was a farce," he smiled knowingly, "because his whole life was a farce. He couldn't tell the truth."

"So you immediately knew—?"

"You knew it was a fake. It's just incredulous that people could believe. Just looking at that footage—it doesn't look real. It looks like a man in an ape suit, anyway you look at it. To think that people would actually believe it, we just sit there and wonder, How many stupid people are there in the world?"

I asked my last question. "How have you accepted this experience? With resentment? You lost money. You invested labor, part of your business into Patterson."

His face radiated with his happy disposition. "I think of Roger as just kind of garbage that you just put out of your mind. But every time I hear about him, I laugh."

"Now it's funny to you?"

"Oh, yeah!" And he let out a joyous, healthy laugh, his cheeks turning red.

I switched off the recorder.

As Pat and I prepared to leave, I asked Swanson if I could contact his pressman, but Swanson didn't know where he was living now. He'd heard the pressman was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. We shook hands finally, and Pat and I headed toward home.

"Swanson was another person Patterson conned," I said to Pat as we rushed onto the freeway.

She nodded.

"It's really quite amazing," I said. "It sounds like Patterson didn't pay *anybody* for *anything*. Isn't that just a form of stealing?"

At home, we filed Swanson's tape. I reassessed where the Roger Patterson project was heading. I knew I needed to call Al DeAtley, who I recognized had been a significant person in Patterson's life. But I wanted to close the loop on a key piece of evidence—the photo of the cowboys and the "Indian," Bob Gimlin. I opened the folder and studied it. The faces held no clues, except that Bob Heironimus looked very tall sitting on his horse. In fact, he looked like the tallest cowboy of the six. He certainly would have been a good candidate to play a Bigfoot. In an attempt to interview the remaining cowboys in the photo—Howard Heironimus and John Ballard—I used the Web to track down the phone number of Howard Heironimus, Bob's brother.

Over the phone, I quickly explained the goals of my investigation. Howard said loudly and bitterly: "I got fucked from the beginning. I don't want anything to do with it."

"So you had a bad experience with Mr. Patterson?"

He grunted.

I broke the long silence. "I've talked briefly with your brother Bob. It sounds like he had a bad experience, too."

"I've got to go to work. Good-bye." The phone clicked.

Hmm. Perhaps I could approach the Heironimus brothers angle through other Heironimus family members, if they existed. I noticed there was an Opal Heironimus listed in the Yakima phone book. I had no idea what her relationship was to Bob or Howard, but I phoned her.

When she answered, I explained my project. I asked her what she knew about Patterson.

"I don't know anything about him!" she said shrilly. "So please don't call anymore. I don't know nothing about all of this, OK?"

She was obviously upset, but why? I hung up and picked up the photo of the six cowboys. There was one cowboy left in the photo who I had to try—John Ballard. He looked young and innocent. Had he become embittered, like the Heironimus brothers? I contacted Ballard's son who gave me his father's private number. After a brief conversation, I could see that John Ballard was mild mannered and soft spoken. He agreed to an interview at his home in Wapato.

We packed up our gear, filled our cooler with sandwiches and cold drinks, and picked up fresh batteries on the way out of town. Soon the blue-gray, white-capped Cascades loomed before us. We raced to the top of Snoqualmie Pass, flew past the Snoqualmie Ski Resort and the steep, white slopes dotted with tiny, dark figures inching down the vast expanses, and on down the other side toward Yakima, toward John Ballard who had sat on his horse with Bob Heironimus and the other cowboys many years ago. As we neared Yakima, we felt we were one more step closer to the truth of Roger Patterson.

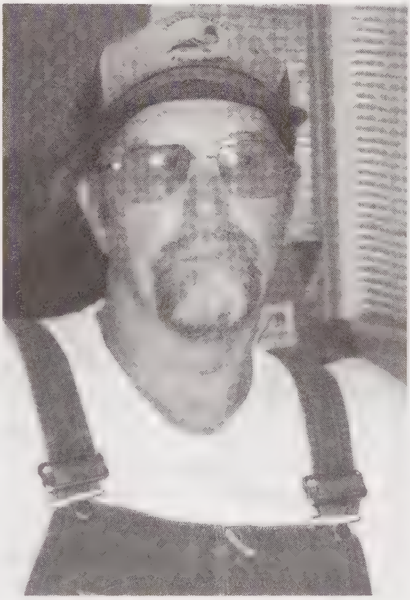
15

JOHN BALLARD

Whether it was a fake or whether it wasn't, if he made money off it, I didn't care.

—John Ballard

John Ballard sat ramrod stiff in a high-back, wooden chair across from me on the other side of his dining room table. Pat, sitting to my right at the end of the table, coddled her camera. To my left, in the adjoining living room, Ballard's wife, Judy, was continuing to read a newspaper. She had started reading it when the interview began. Two hours had passed. Surely she would have finished it by now, I thought. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her head cocked as she eavesdropped on the conversation.



John Ballard supplied horses for use in Roger Patterson's Bigfoot movie shot near Tampico, Washington; Ballard also acted in the movie. Photo by Greg Long.

Ballard, I had discovered, was someone who chose his words methodically and spoke them in a slow, flat, pointed way as if to make certain that his listener got the right story, in this case, the right Roger Patterson story. His communication style also seemed to reflect his personality—and his former profession, a logger—routine, mechanical, repetitive, predictable. His body also reflected the logging profession: the expanse of his shoulders in his white

T-shirt, the tight, muscular lines of his long arms, the wide breadth of his chest —all the result of years of lifting, pushing, pulling, dragging, and loading logs— until he fell off a front-end loader and hurt his back in 1995. He was now stiff-backed, disabled, and on pain medication. A pair of heavy blue coveralls with large, dark-blue suspenders covered his long legs and upper torso. On his head squatted a sweat-stained, gray cap. A thick, well-trimmed gray goatee hugged his large, fleshy mouth and slender chin.

He was from Arkansas, he told me at the outset, and had lived in the Yakima area since he was nine. At twenty, he married. In 1980 he married his second wife, Judy. His first wife's sister happened to be married to Loren Patterson, whom he still considered to be his brother-in-law. He was proud of this, for, as I had discovered, Ballard deeply admired the Pattersons, Roger Patterson in particular.

His admiration for Patterson took root in 1961 when Ballard and his first wife moved into a house right behind Patterson's on Pioneer Street. "I'd go over there and talk with him. And help him. And just visit. We was together everyday. This was when him and me became very good friends." At the time Ballard was twenty-four—six years younger than Patterson—and working in the woods. Soon he was helping Patterson make his wagons. "We'd go to the hills on weekends and cut poles with a bucksaw." Patterson hauled his wagons on the bed of a 1936 yellow Ford pickup and in a trailer hitched behind, remembered Ballard.

Ballard also traveled with Patterson to rodeos. "Roger would run short of money. I'd pay his entry fees to the rodeo, and we'd split what he made." Sometimes Patterson "rented" his horse to doggers, and Patterson would get one-third if the doggers won.

"But he couldn't make a living at it," said Ballard. "Those big rodeo guys didn't mess with him very much." One time a big Indian whacked Patterson's leg with a bucking strap. Enraged, Patterson jumped off his horse, grabbed the Indian by the neck, and threw him like a bull, twisting the Indian's neck. The man's wife came running, "'You killed him! You killed him!'"

And then when Patterson came home after one of his many Bigfoot trips, Ballard would go out with him and have a few drinks. "Roger went to so many places, was so full of ideas! He was full of dreams, aspirations. I think he dreamed of being a millionaire."

Ballard helped Patterson yet again, this time with his Bigfoot movie out near the South Fork. Patterson called him up one day and asked him to come out to his house at Tampico and bring some horses with him. So, loyal Ballard did. He loaded three horses—Tonka, Taffy, and Princess—in his horse trailer and drove out. "There was pack horses and riding horses and camp gear and everything you can think of. I don't know where all the stuff came from. It was all there."

Turned out, Patterson asked Ballard to ride his horse up a steep, scrub-covered embankment. Several of the men had tried, but failed. "'I can ride up the bank, Roger,'" Ballard volunteered, "'but I won't do it twice. If you want to film 'er, film 'er the first time.'" Ballard wheeled and spurred Tonka up the embankment and over the top. "It was sort of a dangerous thing to do." But Patterson got it on film.

On another filming day, Patterson and the men rode onto a neighbor's property without permission. "Roger got in sort of a lawsuit over that. He shot a portion of the film of some guy who was supposed to be a prospector, and he was leading his jackass about this big pond. And it was another guy's property, and he found out about it. He didn't want him shooting the film on his place. Patterson took that part out of the film."

"Why did you contribute your time to the movie?" I asked.

"Oh, it was fun," he said in amiable good humor. "I helped Roger out on most every occasion that I could."

Fun. Helped Roger out. Helped Jerry Merritt, too. "You recorded 'Buffalo Grass,'" I said.

"How do you know that?" He gave me a suspicious glance.

"Jerry Merritt told me." I slid the recorder a bit closer to him. "How did you meet Merritt?"

"I think through Roger, maybe in 1965. I think he drove me over to Jerry's. After that I would stop by Merritt's place. Sometimes Roger would show up."

At the time, Merritt was a lead guitarist in a band playing at The Corral in Yakima. On Friday and Saturday nights, Ballard went to The Corral and sang in Merritt's band. "And Jerry and me started putting some songs together. We went down to Vancouver and recorded seven songs. I sang bass on some of them."

"Did you make any money off 'Buffalo Grass'?" I asked.

"I never got anything."

"Doesn't that bother you?"

"Not at all," he said with indifference.

"Did you have a contract?"

"I don't think so."

I was impressed by Ballard's willingness to do favors for others for no recompense. He was, it seemed, an all-around nice guy.

"Let me show you something." I took from my briefcase the photo of the six men on horseback.

A dull light glowed briefly in Ballard's eyes, like a dying coal brushed by a feeble breeze. He held the photo close to his face. "Why, I'll be. . . ." He identified everyone but Howard Heironimus. "Roger is sitting on Peanuts. Merritt is sitting on one of my horses, Taffy. I'm sure Bob and Howard are on their own horses."

"Does this bring back any memories?"

"Oh, yeah." His eyes were misty. He handed the photo back to me. "It makes me remember when I was kid. I was thirty when that photo was taken. Would you like something to drink?"

Pat and I both readily accepted. Ballard painfully pushed himself up from the table and plodded into the kitchen and poured glasses of iced tea. He handed them to us and then parked his lanky body in the chair.

"Do you remember any discussions about Bigfoot at Merritt's house?" I asked. The cold tea was tangy in my mouth.

"Jerry and Roger talked a lot about different ideas about how to capture Bigfoot." One of Merritt's ideas was to take a big weather balloon and float it up in the air above forest trees where Bigfoot could see it for miles. Inquisitive, the Bigfoot might approach the balloon, and the observers, hidden behind trees, would snap a picture.

When I asked if Pat could take *his* picture, Ballard smiled self-consciously and sat erect. "Sure."

Click-whir, click-whir. Ballard's featureless expression took on life; I could see he liked the artificial attention afforded by the white light flaring softly on his face.

I asked Ballard when Patterson and Merritt started talking about capturing a Bigfoot.

"Before Patterson's book came out. Merritt was trying to make money on music, and Roger was trying to make money on Bigfoot."

"Did they talk about how nice it would be to film a Bigfoot?"

"Yep."

"Were you aware that at one time Patterson went down to Hollywood?"

"Oh, yes!" Ballard said with a spurt of enthusiasm. He took a long, gradual swallow of his tea, his head tilting back inch by inch like the trunk of tree bending under pressure, and then slowly lowered the glass. "He was in California before he ever got the Bigfoot thing going. He was trying to get his little wagons and horses to Disneyland or Knott's Berry Farm, places like that. He was trying to get backing from someone with money. He went to Roy Rogers's house, just showed up there, and talked his way in, actually did go in and talk to Roy Rogers. He told me this personally, after he came back from Roy Rogers's house."

"How was he received by Roy Rogers?"

"Poorly. He did get into the house. He talked about twenty minutes. He wanted to tell him about his ideas that he had and wanted money for backing where he could get something done with it. But he didn't get any there. I had a truck at the time, and he was so sure that he was going to get into Disneyland that he wanted me to haul the wagons and the horses down there for him, but it didn't work out."

"During this period of time, were you aware of any local Bigfoot sightings in the Ahtanum Valley area?"

"Yep."

"Can you remember any of those?"

"Yep."

The Ken Pettijohn sighting was one. Patterson reported it in his book. The sighting occurred about a month before the book was released. This was the sighting Bob Heironimus had voluntarily mentioned when I first phoned him.

Ballard recounted the sighting for me: the Yakima high school boy driving home and coming face to face with a gigantic, manlike figure covered with silvery-white hair in the middle of a road in the West Valley area during a lightning storm.

Ballard said that about the same time, "things" started happening up around Tieton, twelve miles northwest of Yakima. Bins of apples were mysteriously turned over at the edge of wheat fields and in apple orchards. Ballard's uncle, who worked in Tieton, informed him that something was tromping on and squashing the apples.

Ballard had moved away from Pioneer Street in 1962 and for four years had been living in Gleed, ten miles from Tieton, when the events started happening in Tieton.

Curious, Ballard saddled up his horse every Friday night for three weeks running, and all night long he rode along the ditch banks in Tieton between the orchards and the wheat fields to look for signs of Bigfoot. "I never seen or found anything."

Another sighting happened around the time of Pettijohn's encounter. Supposedly seven people saw a Bigfoot near a store located at the Y where the Summit View Extension branches off of Summit View. The creature walked right across Summit View Road and into an orchard. Most amazingly, Ballard commented, the Bigfoot was seen in broad daylight. "And I remember that Roger said he made casts of a lot of footprints on a rancher's land not too far from where he lived. The rancher got tired of it and told him not to go on his land anymore."

Strange, I thought. No rancher I had talked to so far had ever seen Bigfoot on his land or anywhere in the Ahtanum Valley.

"There was a lot of things going around about Bigfoot then." He stroked his goatee and looked at me with a cagey expression.

"Ever hear of man running around the Yakima area in an ape suit?"

"Yes," he answered quickly, and he knew who was supposed to have worn the suit. But he didn't know the facts. "I heard they even found the suit in the trunk of his car."

"Who was it?"

"Bob Heironimus. I never did confront him with it. He was a good friend of mine."

In 1966, Ballard, Bob Heironimus, and Howard Heironimus were working at the Boise Cascade plywood mill. Ballard started working there after leaving B. D. Singer, a local logging company. Bob Heironimus was working as a lathe operator at the "green end" of the mill; Ballard worked on the "dry end." When Howard returned from Vietnam, he worked at the mill, too.

"I didn't socialize with Bob off work," Ballard said. "It was only a casual acquaintance." He measured off his words, "Just very casually. Not very well at all. Just during the shooting of the film."

Peculiar. Ballard had said earlier he considered Heironimus "a good friend."

Ballard would sometimes chat with Bob in the break room and the lunchroom. But, "Bob Heironimus and me really never, ever discussed Bigfoot. Oh, maybe just casual statements. I wasn't friends with him outside work."

Ballard's Adam's apple yo-yoed as another leisurely stream of tea cascaded down his throat. He set the glass down and told a story, which could have been, he admitted, a rumor. Some teenage boys and girls were on a ditch bank in the orchards one night when a silvery, hairy creature appeared and almost scared them to death. "Not long after, they found a suit in the trunk of Heironimus's car." Ballard's fleshy lips parted into a grin. Ballard's impression was that the boys at the ditch knew the creature was going to show up, that the encounter was "a put-up job." This incident occurred after the Pettijohn sighting, probably in the late fall of 1966.

A fact sprang forth in my mind. Pettijohn's creature, Patterson had written in his book, also had "silvery, white hair." It was an interesting coincidence.

"How well did Bob Heironimus know Roger?" I asked.

"He knew Roger well."

"Was Heironimus capable of running around like a Bigfoot in the Yakima area?"

"Not beyond him." Ballard cringed slightly in pain, and he shifted in his chair, his hands lying immobile on the tabletop. "I think he did it to scare people."

"Could he have jumped out in front of Ken Pettijohn?"

"I've often wondered." As he often wondered, he said, about the Summit View Road Bigfoot sighting, in daylight, and at the exact time workers in the orchards were getting off work, shortly after 4:00 P.M.

All the Bigfoot sightings in the West Valley area occurred in the same year, Ballard smiled.

"You think Bob Heironimus had anything to do with them?"

"Could be, but I don't know," he said with disinterest.

I asked if Roger could have convinced Heironimus to wear a suit.

"He might have."

"Do you think that Bob Heironimus might have been performing certain activities for Patterson?"

His brow wrinkled as his pale-brown eyebrows lifted up. "I've heard rumors, yeah. Just like the rumor of Bob Heironimus having the Bigfoot suit, which was made out of horsehide."

I looked at him sharply. "Horsehide?"

"Yep." His jaws clenched as he endured several seconds of pain. "I never saw it, but what I heard was it was gray horsehide. I heard it was in Bob Heironimus's car."

Heironimus was tied to Patterson, Ballard reminded me, not just because he participated in the film shoot behind Patterson's house, but because Gimlin was riding Bob Heironimus's horse during the Bluff Creek filming.

"How do you know?"

"Roger told me." And Patterson, he knew, was riding Ballard's son's horse named Peanuts. Ballard had loaned the horse to Patterson. The horse was a half Welsh, half thoroughbred, a POA, a small horse but big on stamina.

Ballard recalled Patterson's reaction upon seeing Peanuts the first time. Patterson had moved out to Tampico. One day Ballard and his son were running cattle up in the hills in back of Patterson's house for a local rancher. Afterward, they rode down to Patterson's house to visit. "Roger decided then and there he wanted that horse." Right off, Patterson started borrowing the horse whenever he could. "Patterson hauled Peanuts in his Volkswagen van."

I speculated to myself that Patterson might have been strongly drawn to the horse because of its size—small, but tough, like him. A large horse would only call attention to Patterson's diminutive size.

"I think the first riding horse Roger owned was Peanuts," Ballard said. Ballard finally sold the horse to Patterson for a sum of money and a little black Shetland pony in trade.

I redirected Ballard back to the summer and fall of 1966 when Bigfoot started visiting Yakima. "Can you remember anything else?"

"At that time they had put posters up of Bigfoot."

I felt a catch in my throat. "Posters?"

"There was posters put up on the sign posts and on the telephone poles and everything all over about Bigfoot. It was sort of a buildup, like a pyramid come to a head, you know. I don't know this for sure—I shouldn't even say this—but I think it was to try to promote Roger's book to where people would want to buy the book. And then there was sightings Roger wrote of in his book, like the Pettijohn story."

Ballard remembered that before Bigfoot was spotted in certain areas around Yakima, posters depicting Bigfoot would appear prominently on telephone poles, for example, around Tieton. A week or two later, apple bins were found turned over in Tieton. "You put two and two together real fast," Ballard smiled.

In addition to posters in Tieton, posters showed up in Yakima, Naches, and Ahtanum.

I pushed him a bit. "You definitely remember seeing these posters?"

Yes, he *distinctly* remembered. "Roger put them up, or he asked people to put them up." The posters were sixteen by twelve inches in size.

"Did you see him put them up?"

"No, but I knew they were his posters because I saw them in his house one day." As a matter of fact, Patterson told Ballard to his face that he had created a lot of the posters.

"And when was this?" I asked again to make certain.

"In the summer and fall of 1966."

Nice bit of evidence, I thought. Right *before* Patterson's book came out. Bob Swanson's story came to mind of the Bigfoot sighting in the West Valley right after Patterson held a book signing at the Bon Marché.

"The Pettijohn sighting," I said. "It's interesting that it happened a month before Patterson's book came out."

"Very interesting," he said, a wry smile creasing his mouth.

"Did it ever pass through your mind that Patterson was faking Bigfoot sightings? His book was coming out. . . ."

Ballard hooked the crook of his elbow around the top of the chair and winced. "I think it went through everybody's mind."

I zeroed in on him. "But did it go through *your* mind?"

"Oh, yeah. It went through my mind. I never asked Roger."

I heard the newspaper rustle in Judy Ballard's hands. How long did it take to read a newspaper composed of twelve pages?

"He was always so enthused about Bigfoot when I talked to him I never asked him, I—" he stammered, "—I didn't want to ask him." He averted his eyes, half-concealed behind his glasses, and looked down at the edge of the table. "It was something he was doing that he could make some money on, more power to him. I didn't want to ask him because if it wasn't so, I didn't want to put him in a position where he would have to lie to me. And—and if he didn't lie and then he told me that it's all a hoax, then I would have to keep that secret, so I just didn't want to know."

"You didn't want to know," I chided him, despite myself. "I notice there's this pattern where people didn't want to challenge Patterson very much. Friends and relatives of Patterson never questioned him. You were related to the Patterson family, and Roger was a close friend of yours. You never had the desire to challenge him?"

He stared at me with unconcern, the tinted lenses blank screens filtering out the slightest hint of emotion. "I never had the desire to," he said.

"And the reason why is that if he was faking it, you didn't want to know!" I laughed. "Or, if he was making money off fakery, that was OK. I know I'm kind of putting you on the spot here." I stared into the vague images of his eyes.

"Oh, I don't care if you put me in a spot," he smiled cleverly. "Yeah, it was OK. I mean, if he—if he could make a million dollars off it, I—I—fine with me."

Here it was, into the third hour of the interview, and Ballard's admiration for Patterson had suddenly come into the sharpest relief.

"So you're saying it was OK if he made a million dollars off a fake Bigfoot film?"

He continued to look into my eyes without retreating. "That's just fine with me. If people are that gullible, and he was that cunning, let him have that money."

A wave of happiness came over me that the cassette tape was still rolling on the sprockets and that I was recording this most extraordinary statement. "OK, well," I said as flatly as I could, without leading Ballard in any way, "that's an interesting point of view."

Suddenly Judy spoke up shrilly from the sofa, "You realize if this is put in a book?!"

Ballard looked at her sternly. "I don't really care."

She let out peals of mocking laughter, and I couldn't help but laugh along with her.

"I would ask before they put anything in a book to see what they're putting under your name," she warned him. "I wouldn't sign any release until I read what was said, definitely."

"Why?" he said, the slabs of his jaws tightening.

"Because you don't know how twisted it could be," she said, staring at him.

"Well," I interjected, "the tape recorder will prove his statements."

"Yes," he said hoarsely. He tightened his lips into a hard line, then spoke: "I—I—I don't care if he puts that in the book."

For the first time, I sensed a wave of deep emotion washing through Ballard. He moved measurably in his chair. "If Roger made money off it," he said, "and it was fake, and he was smart enough to do it, I had no part in it. It don't involve me in any way, shape, or form. So if he could do that, I don't really care." Cynicism spread throughout his voice. "If he did do it, or if he could do it, it doesn't make me any difference. Roger was a good friend of mine."

His normally rigid frame trembled, his voice rising: "Roger never, ever, *ever* told me that the film was fake. I was with Roger the night before he died. Never did he say the film was fake. I went back to see him the next night, and he was dying. I was probably out there three or four times. The night I remember the most of all was the night before he died. He was in high spirits. He had a smile on his face. He was laughing, and talking, and joking with all of us. Then in twenty-four hours he was dead." He turned sullen and his mouth hardened and grew still.

I said nothing for a moment. I had heard the story before. Bigfoot believers and Patterson apologists claim that because Patterson did not confess to having faked the film on his deathbed, this automatically meant to them that Patterson's film *had* to be real.

The story of Patterson's lack of a deathbed confession sounded powerful on the face of it, but upon what grounds did Patterson's friends and family members believe that Patterson was an honest man and that he wouldn't carry a lie to his grave? I hadn't found *any evidence* that Patterson was an honest man, or that he *would not* take his secrets even to his own grave.

"You were aware that he was once arrested for grand larceny?" I asked.

"Yep. He told me that he was late getting the camera back by two days. That's all, *two days.* He told me, 'I was just ready to walk in the door of Sheppard's Camera Shop, and they arrested me.' He was returning the camera when they arrested him. They took him to jail. He was really disgusted because they done that to him. It's my opinion that he was being mistreated by Sheppard's Camera Shop." He curled his lower lip in disdain.

"Do you know the circumstances behind the arrest?" I challenged him.

"No," he said.

I turned the conversation back to Patterson. "How did he manage to survive?"

"That's a real good question."

"My impression is that he was often short of cash."

"That was the story of Roger's life," said Ballard. "He didn't like to work too much. If he worked on his own projects, he would work day and night. But he didn't like to go out and work for anyone else. He wasn't what you'd call an early riser and do anything. He got up at 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning."

"Did you hear stories that he wasn't able to pay his bills in the mid-1960s?" I asked.

Ballard paused for five seconds. "To be honest with you, I don't know a time in Roger's life when there wasn't a real problem in him paying his bills. I used to loan him money occasionally."

"Does Bob Gimlin strike you as a truthful and honest man?" I said suddenly.

"I'd rather not say," he answered coolly. "He's a very likable guy, he's a very likable guy. Real smooth-talking fellow. He has a nice voice."

"So you won't answer the question if he's truthful or honest?"

"No, I won't answer that question."

I glanced at my watch. I decided to ask the "big question."

"Do you think the film Patterson took was of a real Bigfoot?"

He was silent for a few moments. "My first reaction was, 'Why is it so fuzzy?'"

"After the film was taken, did you conclude that both Patterson and Gimlin were being truthful and honest about what they saw down in California?"

"At that time, yeah."

"Do you still conclude that?" I asked.

"I have my doubts now."

He had doubts, I thought. But he admired Patterson, and even if Patterson had faked the Bigfoot, he still admired him.

"I've got one more question. It sounds like you considered Patterson a close friend. Why do you think he considered you a friend?"

"Because I cared." His voice broke ever so slightly. "Because when he needed something, he knew that I was there to get it."

"But you've said you've had some doubts about Roger's film."

"The first time I seen the film I had some doubts about it. That didn't make Roger Patterson not my friend," he said firmly.

"So, if the movie is proven to be a fake, Roger Patterson still remains a friend?"

"Oh, yeah."

"And you still would have respect for him as a friend?"

"Oh, yeah! I wouldn't think a bit less of him. Whether it was a fake or whether it wasn't, if he made money off it, I didn't care. It won't change my opinion or my feelings toward Roger Patterson one bit. He was practically a brother of mine. We could get in quarrels and fight and next day we'd be the best of friends. He was really close to me."

"Well, thanks, John, for the interview." I clicked the recorder off.

As the door closed behind us and Pat and I headed for our car parked in Ballard's gravel driveway, Pat said softly, "I think his wife wasn't too happy with him."

"Yes," I whispered. We opened the car doors. "But I gave him the chance to retract his statement. But he didn't."

We slipped into the car. I started the engine. "You know, Ballard strikes me as an example of one of those stepping stones Patterson used to get to where he wanted to go." I looked in the rearview mirror and started backing out of the drive. "He was a bit player in Patterson's Bigfoot scheme, but an important resource. And he doesn't care if Patterson faked Bigfoot. Not at all. Even though he seems to suspect that the film is a fraud, and he even suspected Patterson was faking Bigfoot sightings in the local community. Amazing! A very loyal follower, so loyal he's willing to put friendship above lying." I shook my head. "Patterson really had an effect on some people."

"I think that if Roger pulled off a hoax, he didn't tell Ballard anything," Pat said.

"I agree. Ballard served his purpose. He was a tool, but he wasn't part of any inner circle."

Back home, we regrouped. I had successfully interviewed two people from the photo. One was dead (Patterson), and three weren't talking (Gimlin, Howard Heironimus, and Bob Heironimus). I now knew I had to interview the one witness who everyone knew, whose name came up in nearly every interview, the one who was always a shadowy presence, known by name but whose story was always unknown, except to the degree that people told it: "He supported Roger Patterson in his hunt for Bigfoot. He was Roger's brother-in-law."

Al DeAtley.

After preparing three pages of questions over several evenings, I took a deep breath and picked up the phone. I had never talked to a multimillionaire before. I punched in the numbers and listened to my heart pounding in syncopated rhythm with the buzzing phone on the other end.

16

AL DEATLEY

I made money on our relationship through the whole thing. Yeah. No doubt about it. I made some substantial money.

—Al DeAtley talking about his relationship with Roger Patterson

The coarse-textured, male voice on the other end of the phone was firm, self-assured. "This is Al DeAtley."

I introduced myself, described the book project, and asked for an interview.

"Well, yeah, but I'm leaving town tomorrow and won't be back until a week from Friday." DeAtley's tone was businesslike.

"May I call you when you return?"

"No problem."

I hung up and reflected over our brief exchange. DeAtley's cooperative attitude puzzled me, especially since his name had appeared in the Yakima paper along with Patterson's and the anonymous Man in the Suit. Several weeks later, I phoned DeAtley again.

"I think this has been kind of beat to death, hasn't it?" He laughed with an edge of irritation.

I laughed along with him, then I answered with conviction, "Well, there's not been much written on Patterson that I've been aware of."

For a moment he was silent, then he agreed to an interview. Frankly, I was shocked. Why would he be willing to speak to a writer who he knew was probing into Patterson?

March 17, 1999. I set out over the mountains for Yakima, alone; Pat had taken the train to Albany, Oregon, to visit her family. My briefcase held questions for DeAtley and a dozen blank tapes. DeAtley had promised me an entire afternoon. As the grade of the highway gradually ascended the slopes of the mountains now turning green with the first signs of spring, I absorbed myself in everything I knew about DeAtley to date gathered from my interviews, the scanty Bigfoot literature, and the local library.

DeAtley owned Superior Asphalt Paving Company and its subsidiary Superior Asphalt and Concrete Company. Their combined annual sales in 1997 were $95,000,000. David Wasson of the *Yakima Herald* had told me that DeAtley was building an enormous house costing many millions of dollars on a hillside in Yakima, apparently as a monument to his success.

Other facts: As Patterson's brother-in-law, DeAtley had loaned Patterson money to help him build his miniature wagons and a stagecoach. As far as Patterson's footage, DeAtley allegedly received the precious film by airmail the day after Friday, October 20, 1967. However, he had no recollection of where he processed it, according to Peter Byrne, although DeAtley was the first person to view it, supposedly on Sunday, October 22, 1967, in DeAtley's house. On that day, while in DeAtley's house, Green and Dahinden persuaded Patterson to show the footage to scientists at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, "where we at least had some top people softened up enough to take an interest in the subject," as Green wrote in *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*.[1] Then, on Thursday, October 26, DeAtley was with Patterson, Gimlin, Green, and others in Vancouver showing the footage to experts at the British Columbia Museum. "The Vancouver showings," Green wrote, "both for the university and museum people and for the press, were well received." But, Green reported, although "the film was the talk of the town for a day or two . . . interest died down and it quickly became obvious that no one was going to do anything about it."[2]

On Wednesday, November 1, 1967, DeAtley was with Patterson and Gimlin in Los Angeles forming Bigfoot Enterprises, a corporate partnership. While there, the trio attempted to gain further media interest, but failed. Then, *Life* magazine heard about the footage. Interested in Patterson's story, *Life* flew the trio to New York City. Within two hours of landing, the men were joined by Ivan Sanderson, a naturalist and popular science writer, who planned to write an article about the film for *Argosy*, a men's adventure magazine. The article was eventually published in the February 1968 issue. Sanderson wrote, "I have known Roger Patterson by correspondence for about six years [since approximately 1961]." Over the next week, *Life* staff studied the footage, questioned Patterson and Gimlin, and showed the footage and stills of selected frames to the departments of zoology and anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The experts quickly declared the footage a hoax. Before Thanksgiving, 1967, DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin were back in Yakima, their airfare paid by *Argosy*.

Then, sometime in 1968, as Jerry Merritt remembered it, Jack Oliphant, a Los Angeles publicist to Hollywood stars, financed a cocktail party in New York City to promote the footage to potential investors. (Perhaps, I speculated, the cocktail party actually occurred during the *Life* magazine trip in the fall of 1967.) Pat Mason, Merritt's agent, was evidently also in New York with DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin—the latter dressed like an Indian. According to Merritt, the party was a flop. Then, probably in 1968, DeAtley financed the production of *Bigfoot*, a movie, which he and Patterson showed in theaters around the country. Patterson died in 1972, and in 1975, DeAtley dissolved his interest in Bigfoot Enterprises and vanished from the Bigfoot scene—until he was quoted in the *Yakima Herald-Republic* on February 4, 1999: "The only thing I did was loan Roger money." Those were the facts.

Entering Yakima, I bought a sandwich and drove downtown to the Tower Building where DeAtley had an office. Parked on a side street in the shade of a tree, I ate while I scribbled a few more questions on my list. Then, with slightly trembling fingers, I inserted fresh batteries in the recorder.

As I walked into the marbled lobby of the building, briefcase in hand, my mouth turned dry. A familiar adage began rapidly looping over and over in my head: *Remember the Golden Rule. He who owns the gold rules. Remember the Golden Rule. . . .* Although I am a large man, I suddenly began to feel small. DeAtley, I thought, is an immensely rich, and therefore powerful, man. He can crush me like a gnat.

I stepped off the elevator and onto soft carpet. With my handkerchief I dabbed at the nervous sweat seeping out onto my forehead as I walked to the end of the silent hallway. There I found an open door with gold numbers: 380. The door seemed to be inviting me in. At the threshold, I stopped and cautiously peered into an intimate waiting room. In the center of the room sat a small, round, cherry-wood table. Two chairs were neatly placed on either side of the table, and along the walls sat several elegant gray- and pink-upholstered pieces of Victorian furniture. I leaned my head and shoulders inside. To my left stood a polished stand with a large glass case on top. Inside the case on a pedestal was an intricately crafted model of a large yacht, about eighteen inches long. That must be a model of DeAtley's yacht, I thought. On the wall in front of me hung a long, rectilinear painting with colorful orange, red and russet abstract forms shaped as galloping horses. Another room adjoined the conference room, and inside it I could see a man, his feet propped up on a desk. He was deep into a book he held in his lap. My pulse was beating hard. I rapped my knuckles on the open door. The man stood up and walked quickly and with authority into the waiting room. He appeared to be close to six feet tall. "Mr. DeAtley?" I said, surprised that my voice functioned.

He extended his hand. It felt large and strong as I shook it. I looked into a rough-looking face featuring a bulbous nose and thin, graying hair on a balding head. The jagged lines in his face along his cheek bones and around his chin and the hard look around his mouth struck me as the marks of a working man, rough-hewn and tough. Like me, he was nervous. He offered me one of the chairs at the cherry-wood table.

"I'd like to tape the interview," I said, pulling out my recorder. "I'm a stickler for accuracy."

"Fine," he said.

DeAtley was rapidly chewing gum, and his eyes were darting. His moving mouth fell still as I started the recorder. I poised my pen above a blank pad and glanced at my questions. My head was throbbing. I could see from the rapid blinking of his steely eyes that DeAtley was scrutinizing my every move. I sensed he had girded himself mentally and emotionally for the interview.

"Let's start with some background on yourself," I said, and calm eased into my voice. He *hadn't* crushed me like a gnat.

He resumed chewing for a moment, then spoke. His voice had a gritty fullness with a country twang flowing through it. He was Al DeAtley Jr. He was sixty-five years old, and he had learned the construction trade from his father, Al DeAtley Sr., who just after World War II moved his young family to Yakima. After building houses and commercial buildings for a while, DeAtley Sr. loaned money to the owner of a paving business in Yakima. In 1953, when the owner was thrown from a horse and killed, and with the loan in default, DeAtley Sr. took over the dead man's enterprise. DeAtley Jr. and his brother were each given 10 percent shares in the company. Al DeAtley Jr. had graduated from high school in 1952; after attending the University of Washington until 1955, he started working full-time for his father. Eventually, DeAtley Jr. bought the entire company in 1972.

"It's all I've ever done," DeAtley said, gnawing his gum. "I've never worked for anybody my whole life except Superior Asphalt Company." He hiccuped. "Excuse me. I've just quit smoking, and I'm chewing this gum that's supposed to keep me from starting again."

Today, DeAtley's company now employed seven hundred workers in Yakima, three Southwest states, and Mexico. "We manufacture crushed rock; sell asphalt; pave roads; and build roads, streets, and highways." It's an impressive empire, I thought.

DeAtley hiccuped and then glanced away uncomfortably.

"Let's talk about Roger Patterson," I said.

"Well, let's see. . . . I met Roger when I was in the seventh or eighth grade, when I used to visit Jimmy Johnson, who lived next door to the Patterson family. I was in the same grade. He was a good athlete, a small man, but he was fast, he was good, and he was tough. He was kind of admired in high school. I never ran around with him any, at all," DeAtley cautioned. "We graduated the same year. *Hiccup!*" He touched his large fingers to his lips.

"What was your first impression of Roger?"

"He was good. He didn't wear his pants low or have the duck's ass hair or anything like that. His mother was very religious. He was an average kid."

"You became friends?"

"No," he corrected me. "Our relationship during the high school years was acquaintances, not friends. We did not run around together." He eyeballed me. "He was not in the same group I was. I ran around with groups from the church, and I don't know who he ran around with."

I asked him when he met Iva, Roger's youngest sister, who DeAtley married.

He started dating her when he was a sophomore in college. "I remember exactly where I saw her." A glint lit up his eyes. "The construction company and we were hauling rock for a seal coating out on the west side here, and I was driving a dump truck one day. And at the intersection of Seventy-second and Tieton Drive, there was this god-damned, good-looking broad out there sunbathing." He laughed, leering. "And it was the talk of all the truck drivers, I'll tell ya. . . . Once one of us spotted her, all the trucks went the same route then. She was working in a nursing home here in town, and I ran into her a couple three months later at a dance, and she was dating another guy, and I was dating another girl, but a couple of months after that we started dating." He saw Iva a few other times walking by his house on her way to her sister Phyllis's house two blocks from the DeAtleys, a house that DeAtley's father had built and sold to Phyllis and her husband Charles. Two years later DeAtley and Iva married.

His mouth moved in an elastic motion, his teeth continuing their powerful motions as they ground down on the gum. DeAtley explained that at the time he married Iva, Roger wasn't yet married. Roger had a stepfather, DeAtley explained, which was a bad situation. The Patterson family were an active family. DeAtley's mouth ruminated like a cow's. "There was always the holidays, and Iva and Phyllis and their mother would have picnics in the park. My family would join them. Roger and I were *never* buddies," he emphasized coolly, leaning toward me.

I aimlessly scrawled meaningless shapes in the margins of my pad. DeAtley was working hard to distance himself from Patterson in my eyes.

"His whole family were rodeo guys. All cowboys," he said sourly, "and them assholes talk cowboy shit all the time. I never had an interest in a horse. Hay goes in one end, and what comes out the other you gotta shovel. I was a construction-stiff guy. So Phyllis's husband, Charlie—he was a painter—he and I spent most of our time together at these family deals, and all the Patterson boys were sitting around talking cowboy stuff, horses and all that. So, of course, like all things happen, Roger gets out of the service and comes home and needs a job, so I put him to work."

"How long did he work for you?"

"About three weeks." He stopped chewing and shot me a steely gaze. "I fired him." He frowned.

"Why did you fire him?"

"Well, he had no interest in his job," he smirked. "Roger was an artistic person. He never held down a job. I think he held down a job for about a year one time."

"Yes, that's one theme I see in his life. What did he do for a living?"

"Well, he worked for a parts house here in town delivering parts. *Hiccup!*"

"Automotive parts?"

"Yes. Well, he conned his mother until she died," he said abruptly.

"Really?"

"He talked her out of what little bit of money she had. His father had died in the war. Roger was eight or nine. Roger always had a champagne appetite with a beer income." He grinned. "I remember right after he first got out of the service in '55 or '56. He bought this old '48 Buick. He had the engine rebuilt, and he didn't put any antifreeze in it. Froze up and broke the block. And someone stole the car. And about ten years later or so, in one of our gravel pits, we were digging and we ran into something. A car. We kept bailing it out with a drag line, and we finally pulled out the motor, and his car was in the bottom of one or our ponds."

"How did it get there?"

"I don't know." He smiled, cynicism crawling under his lips.

"So are you suggesting that he put it in there?"

"Well, I'm not suggesting anything," he said, pushing his chair back slightly and crossing his leg. "I know he never paid the guy who rebuilt the motor either. He did have some insurance on the car."

"I'm going to be frank with you," I said, "because I've talked to a lot of people. A theme that runs through these interviews—Roger Patterson wasn't a terribly honest guy."

"I wouldn't—I don't want to—I don't think he—" He resumed chewing, then stopped. "I'm not going to call him dishonest, but he—"

"Well, let's put it this way: lack of integrity maybe, or—?"

"Well, his integrity was always in place by the fact that, 'Don't worry about it, I'll always pay ya back.' And he always was going to pay you back," he said as his smile turned into a sardonic grin, "when he got rich. And he always had a get-rich scheme running. And I was involved in three of 'em. He was a good salesman."

I paused and looked him hard in the eyes. "What were those businesses?"

"The first was the angora goats." He provided the already familiar description I had heard many times—Patterson building little carts, placing little kids in them, having the goats walk in a circle. "And the angora goats were beautiful . . . a beautiful goat, white," marveled DeAtley. "He trained them well. But he was an artist, he wasn't a businessman."

"That's what I've heard." I continued to doodle on the pad. He gave the pad a sidelong glance.

"So, once he got it all done," he continued, "had them all trained and everything, he'd lose interest in six months or so."

"And you helped him then finance—" I started.

"I was one of the guys he'd come to get the money," he smiled. He said that he gave Patterson "a couple thousand bucks" for the goat and cart project, which included the goats, the lumber, everything else.

"He used basic bicycle wheels, and he used the yoke on a bicycle to hook the wheels to the carts. He knew how to stretch a dollar a long ways, you know. And his kids were—they had all of our kids' hand-me-down clothes. Back in those days we didn't have freezers in our homes. You could buy half a beef, have it cut and put in your locker. My wife would go to the meat locker. I know she was taking food over to his house. He always had a good manure business where in the spring he'd have his ad in the newspaper, and he'd haul cow manure around to the people. He usually got it off of dairy lots. He was just a peddler." A knowing smile twisted his mouth. "He just didn't like to work an eight to five. He was too much of an artist."

"He didn't want to work in a conventional job."

He nodded, then thought back. "He was an athlete. He rodeo-ed during those years and made some pretty good money, hit the jackpot and stuff. He was better than the average cat. And he trained hard. He'd train much more than the other guys. He was one of the top, not of the nation, of these jackpot rodeos around here. He made some pretty good dough. And his wife, you know—he got her pregnant when she was, like, fifteen. She came from a typical family of those years where the dad worked hard and steady, and he laid a little ground and had a little farm and still worked out of another job, and the Mondors did pretty well. The Mondors were feeding them some money, too. Probably 50 percent of his married life, he lived in one of the Mondors' houses."

"It sounds like he was open to the idea of going and borrowing money from people and not paying it back, or accepting charity."

"Yep. He was a nice guy, but he—"

"Why do you think he was that way?" I interrupted.

"Well, his brothers . . . they all fell into good, ol' steady jobs." For example, DeAtley explained, for thirty years Loren Patterson read power meters for the local power company. DeAtley gave out a coarse laugh and said that the brothers hated "designated authorities, no doubt about it. The whole family did. And I think that was brought on primarily by their step-dad."

About seven years after the Patterson brothers' father died, their mother married a Norwegian named Forsman from Selah, near Yakima. Forsman was faced with instituting his authority over the Patterson children where there had been none for years. After Mrs. Patterson lost her husband, she let the Patterson boys "kind of be the males of the household."

Also, said DeAtley, the Patterson brothers' natural father was a transient construction worker, which could explain Roger's rebellion against authority. "His father was the type of guy who didn't like holding jobs down too much either. Always the gold mine's across the hill again. I think he found life easier to be out making the money and sending it home. He was a provider for his family, but he didn't really like to be around and raise the family. That was pretty much left to their mother. So I don't think the boys had much structure from their daddy."

After remarrying, Mrs. Forsman (formerly Patterson), bought some land and built a little house at Seventy-second and Tieton Drive.

After DeAtley married Iva Patterson, the newlyweds rented Mrs. Forsman's house. She was working as a live-in, full-time cook at another house. When Roger left the Army, he needed a place to stay. So he moved in with the DeAtleys.

"No problem," DeAtley said with equanimity. "You know, we were all family back then. But the son-of-a-bitch, uh, he was always on health kicks," he laughed. "And that particular time he was eating six raw eggs for breakfast. Well, he wasn't putting any food in the 'frigerator. He was eating all my goddamned eggs, and it pissed me off, and I kicked his ass out!" He bristled.

"So he was kind of freeloading?"

"Well, yeah."

"Did he have a job?"

"No, no. That was about the same time he went to work for me for three weeks, and I had to fire him. He'd be late. Construction's hard work, and you got to put your heart into it. I think, Greg, he got through school on his athletic ability, frankly. He was a cute little guy, but he was well built. He got through the service the same way; and fuck that shit of carrying a rifle going to Korea, he's gonna go into the entertainment business. He did."

"An acrobat," I said.

"And when he got out," DeAtley continued, "it was just, 'What's the next thing?' In his mind all the rest of us had gone to school by doing our homework at night and getting through it. We went the normal way. He always had the scheme. If you eat this food, you grow faster or get bigger muscles. His mind worked in a scheming way, that he could get there by some other way than just paying the full dues of living it out in life like the rest of us do. So, none of that was unusual."

When Roger's mother got sick, she moved back to her house. DeAtley and Iva moved out, and Roger lived with his mother for two to three years until he married Patty Mondor.

I raised my hand and interrupted him. "Side two," I said. I flipped the cassette.

DeAtley hunched forward and clasped his hands. With side two rolling, he said that during the 1960s he worked eighty-hour weeks with his father to make Superior Asphalt into a thriving business. DeAtley was up before his family was up and came home when they were in bed. Every night he struggled to repair "junky" equipment to get another day out of it. "I was right there, and Roger would just kind of. . . ." He glowered. "He flustrated [*sic*] me because one thing when I married my wife, I did marry the whole family." He sighed.

"Everybody had the impression that I was rich 'cause I'm in business. I make all this goddamned money, 'cause they see, 'Well, he's got a contract, a half a million dollars.' Sometimes those half million jobs we lost money on. But my wife, you know, she had that loving heart to kind of take care of everybody. When Roger's mother died, all the kids got together and said, 'OK, we're going to split this headstone six ways.' " DeAtley scowled. "I paid it all."

"You did?"

"'Cause they wouldn't put it in place until it was paid for. So, it's not unusual the family did that. I was the only one in business in the whole group. And they thought I was rich. And I wasn't. I was fuckin' poorer than they were, frankly, a lot of times during that [period]."

I scrawled interlacing circles on the pad. "But you felt that it was OK at times to pay for things?" I said.

"I think what it is, when you come down to it, you know, in Washington your wife owns half of the estate. And I found out a long time ago you can have a great ol' fuckin' fight, create a lot of problems, and then she does it anyway. So sometimes it's just easier to not go through that, on some things. I'm not sayin'. . . . She's a lovely person, but. . . ."

I raised my eyebrows. So it was better, I reflected, for DeAtley, a young, hardworking go-getter, to support a brother-in-law whom he clearly didn't admire. Interesting, I thought.

DeAtley tapped the tips of his knobby thumbs together. "My wife believed it was better to give to Roger or her family in a charity thing than giving to a charity. And my attitude always. . . ." He pursed his lips tightly. "I don't do that with my own children today. I have a value that you can cripple people by giving 'em too much."

"Sure," I conceded.

"But I was so busy doing my thing trying to survive in business and pay my bills, these were minor distractions to me, I guess, is the point."

I asked him if he or Patterson dreamed up the angora goats and carts project.

"He came up with the idea," answered DeAtley. "He'd been to a fair. The cost of a ride was so much. So he did the math, and he said, 'Well, goddamn, that could make some money.' He worked the cart rides in the parking lot, fairs, or other places. And, you know, I usually got part of my money back."

"So you did ask for repayment?"

"Oh, of course," he grinned. "Oh, yeah, we were partners in all that stuff. Or at least I had a debt against the assets. The angora goats, I actually sold them to another guy and got my money out of that."

"Oh, after that business fell apart?"

"After he didn't want to work anymore," he clarified. He chuckled dryly. "Same old school: in the winter you had to feed the damn things, and duh-duh-duh . . . ," he said like a metronome.

"Right, right."

"He was gonna take them to California, and I drove down there with him. We bumped around to see where we could put them up down there. And there was opportunity, but he was just not a grinding-out guy. If he had had a right-brained partner—they could have probably done well together."

"Yeah," I concurred, "he would come up with ideas, and the partner would actually do the work."

"And he built the stuff," DeAtley said. "And he could build anything. These wagons were beautiful. People just marveled at them."

"I understand they were miniature, but everything was to scale."

"Yeah, yeah."

"What were the other enterprises?" I asked.

"The angora goats, stagecoaches, and the Bigfoot venture."

I glanced at my watch. An hour had passed. This might be my one and only interview with DeAtley, so I skipped the stagecoaches and shifted to the Bigfoot enterprise. I laid out a timeline of Patterson's major actions and took DeAtley to the time of Patterson's "pre-expeditions" described in Patterson's book. I asked DeAtley if he paid for Patterson's expenses for these outings, before the Bluff Creek footage, about 1964, 1965, 1966.

"I don't recall. . . ." He paused. "If I did, it was a very small amount. I did pay for having the book printed. I loaned him the money. Franklin Press."

"Did you know Glen Koelling?"

"No."

"Ever hear of Trail Blazers, Inc.?"

"Not that I recall," he replied in a soft voice.

"The book. Did he just come up and say, 'I need some money for this book I'm doing'?"

"No," DeAtley said. "'Here's a copy of the book. Read it. The printer won't let me have the book until I give him some money.'"

"So, he ordered it to be printed," I suggested, "and he didn't come and pick it up and pay for it, is that right?"

"Well, that's my recollection. Which is not unusual," DeAtley smiled.

I nodded. "That would be typical of Roger."

"He wasn't gonna rip 'em off. He was gonna pay them sometime. And he, you know, did that honorably. He wasn't dishonest about it."

I stopped my wandering pen in its tracks on the pad of paper and looked askance at DeAtley. "Wait a minute. You're saying Roger was honest in that he had all intentions to pay money back?"

"True."

"But he didn't always pay it back." I burst out laughing. DeAtley's concept of "honor" was strange.

"But he didn't set out to rip you off either," DeAtley said, unfazed.

I shook my head in disbelief. "How much money did you loan or give to him?" I locked my eyes on DeAtley's.

He looked right at me with a sober expression. "I loaned him about five hundred dollars to six hundred dollars to pay for about a thousand books. It wasn't a major amount of money," he qualified.

"Did you help market Patterson's book?"

He answered my question in a roundabout way by saying that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in England made a program about Patterson's Bluff Creek footage. "They gave Roger a copy of the program as part of the deal." He paused and added, "Which was legal. I had a local guy take it and edit it into a fifty-two-minute television show." Then, Patterson hired someone DeAtley knew to make a ninety-six-minute feature film. "And I financed that," said DeAtley.

When, I wondered to myself, did Pat Mason come into the picture? I remembered Mason had edited a short film using Patterson's footage.

"So we splashed it on television," DeAtley continued. Then he and Patterson premiered the movie in a small-town theater. "I went to that show with him at the auditorium down there, and, yes, I stood there and sold books. But that's the only time I was connected to the books at all."

DeAtley said he spent $3,500 to edit the ninety-six-minute film. "It wasn't all that expensive," he cautioned.

But how much was $3,500 in 1960s dollars?

DeAtley's serious demeanor had changed. He seemed happy to be reliving old times. I also sensed that he was taking control of the interview. I let him. I had a number of hard questions for him later.

DeAtley said that he met some people with experience in television advertising, which was a new technique in the mid-1960s. From my research, I knew he was referring to "four-walling," where a distributor hires an entire theater to show one movie, then blitzes the local market with intense advertising to pack the theater in a concentrated period of time. American National Enterprises (ANE) in Salt Lake City, which later bought rights to Patterson's footage, had refined the four-walling technique.

"They were taking wildlife films," DeAtley said, "like Alaska hunting films, and they were making thirty copies, taking it into the TV market, pumping it with television advertising in the dead market, which was January through March. That's when you buy your advertising on TV. Little competition. And then just flood the market with multiple prints. It's very financially advantageous."

DeAtley sat up, looking taller, and suddenly became animated, waving his hands. "In fact, the night after the opening show down there—and we sold the books—we had a trash can so-high," he held his hand about three feet above the floor, "in the motel room of all the money because we showed the film in that school auditorium. So everything was cash—ones, fives, tens, and twenties. And we had a trash can full of money, and we were throwing it on each other on the bed and stuff!" His mouth broke into a huge grin. For the first time, I noticed DeAtley's teeth. They were large and yellow and strong. They reminded me of an unknown animal's teeth, very powerful and capable of rending its prey to shreds in seconds. I heard a powerful emotion rippling through DeAtley's voice.

I replied, however, with indifference. "Oh, really?"

"Yeah. It was a very, very, very financially good deal, that day." Clearly, he was fully enjoying the memory.

To discover DeAtley's precise financial relationship to Patterson, I returned to Patterson's book project. "He was going to pay you back for your loan?"

"Well, I got paid back. I made money on our relationship through the whole thing. No doubt about it. I made some *substantial* money."

"But did he pay you back immediately for the book?"

"I didn't get the book money back until the movie went on the road."

I wanted to hear more, but first I had a critical point to explore. "Roger took a trip to Northern California in 1964, which is in his book."

"I had no connection with that at all," DeAtley said quickly. "I never believed in Bigfoot." He turned somber. "Roger talked to me about it, and I didn't believe it. I thought it was, you know, a bunch of bullshit, and I've built roads my whole life. I'm just the complete opposite of Roger. I can't write that anybody can read. I have no artistic talents at all. The only thing that I believe in that I can't touch, feel, and kiss, is God. I believe in that. But everything else I gotta touch it to believe it. And even some stuff I still don't believe it. So when he started talking about Bigfoot, and his buddies come around, and they're all a bunch of radical Bigfoot fuckers, I laughed at 'em. They were surviving, they were making a little money out of it, they were having fun. I guess my only hobby back in those years was skiing. I and my family skied in the winter time. You can't build roads when the snow's on the ground. I took that this Bigfoot hunting was some of these people's 'thing.' Green and those guys from Canada, they get so hyped, you know. I built roads all over the mountains here, from here to Seattle. I've been up and down every piece of that shit. And I never saw Bigfoot. I had no interest. None whatsoever."

Why, then, I thought to myself, did he financially support Roger's pursuit of a pipe dream? DeAtley had said earlier that he really didn't have that much money at the time.

"OK. You're a businessman," I said. "You're interested in constructing roads, developing a business. I understand that. But here's Roger. He comes to you, he needs some money to get the book in his hands so he can sell it." I reminded him that after the book was published, Patterson and Gimlin traveled to Bluff Creek, and Patterson came back with his footage. I said, "After the book gets off the ground in '66, and *before* the footage, you're saying you didn't spend or loan him any money, or give him any money for expenses to look for Bigfoot?"

"If I did, it was twenty bucks here and twenty bucks there," he said, eyeing me. "Roger couldn't stretch a buck. He never had a decent automobile in his life. Never had a decent pickup truck. He didn't live high on the hog. He was very frugal. And his wife was extremely frugal. They just lived off nothing. They got clothes from the rest of the family for the kids. If Roger tapped me for fifty bucks here and there, uh, I probably wouldn't remember it. I was a busy man. You know, I had my world, and he was, you know, flustrating [*sic*] me at times, so I knew for twenty bucks I could get rid of him." He broke into laughter.

Patterson was a nuisance, I thought. I tapped the tip of my pen on the pad. I wondered why DeAtley didn't just tell Patterson to get a job.

"Otherwise," DeAtley continued, "he'd stand there and try to sell me on his great theories, or some goddamned thing. 'Here, take twenty bucks and get out of here.' I might have done that. I cannot recall. It was not an impact in my life."

"Just so it's really clear," I said. "The way Green writes about it is that you were funding Roger's expeditions. Roger would get in his VW van. He had little ponies, and Gimlin would sometimes go with him, and they'd go out on these field expeditions. So you're saying you didn't say to Roger, 'Roger, I'll be a partner with you in this hunt for Bigfoot'?"

"No."

"'And if you find Bigfoot—'"

"No way," he said.

"'—or capture something, then we can work together to sell it or market it.'"

"No. I did not," he asserted emphatically. "I got involved financially after the footage."

"After the footage? Green wrote that you received the film."

"Have you met John Green?"

"I've talked to him," I said.

"OK, well." DeAtley smiled and narrowed his eyes at me. "John has tried to make a living out of Bigfoot over the years."

I agreed. Green had made quite a bit of money off his book *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*. In fact, I knew he had stopped working as a journalist for awhile because of the income from his book.

"So my point is," DeAtley said, "when people become nonscientific, and it starts to become economics, sometimes things get embellished a little bit."

"OK, so you think he was embellishing it?"

"Well, you know, 'expeditions,'" he sniffed. "That sounds real neat, you know."

"Well, frankly, Patterson calls them 'pre-expeditions.' They supposedly took place before he had the *big* expedition."

"If the truth be known," he said sardonically, "knowing Gimlin and Patterson, they probably took their horses, stopped in a tavern and got drunk and chased women for a while and found some strange thing to fuck, and then maybe they got into the woods sometime." Throaty laughter spouted from his mouth.

I was shocked at his words, but I found myself laughing along with him.

"Both of them were believers," he said. "Roger believed there was a Bigfoot. No doubt about it."

"You knew, of course, Roger was interested in Bigfoot," I said, attempting to steer DeAtley back to his support of Patterson's Bigfoot hunt. "Roger came around and probably talked about it all the time."

"Once in a while," he corrected me. "I didn't spend much time with Roger, frankly."

"How much time did you spend with him? Did you go over to his house all the time?"

"Never, never," he declared. "I went to his house after he got sick. We used to go out 'cause we all knew he was dying. My wife and he were very close. My wife was the baby, and he was the one right after the baby. And there was quite a spread between them and the other children. So those two little ones, they buddied up and held on to each other when their daddy died, and then they buddied up after their mother married Forsman. Their mom was very subservient to males, so Iva and Roger came third. They hung on to each other. My wife and Roger were extremely close."

I checked the progress of the tape rolling on the spools. "Are you saying that during this period when the book was being sold by him and his partner Koelling, you didn't have that much contact with him?"

"I don't recall having *any* contact with him."

"But it sounds like he might hit you up, or he felt that in order for you to get him to go away—"

"He might have. I cannot recall. It's been too long. I cannot recall. If he hit me up for money, it was because he had to go do something. I didn't believe [in Bigfoot]. So I wouldn't be financing a pre-expedition I didn't believe in. . . . I'd say, 'Fuck this whole shit! Just get out of here.'"

Yet, I reminded myself silently, you freely gave Patterson money to pay for at least part of the expenses of printing the book.

I turned DeAtley's attention to the story of the shipment of Patterson's film footage from Eureka to Yakima. "You then received the undeveloped film and you had it processed someplace. Can you tell me about that? Because Roger is now an excited guy, and I would assume he needs to call someone, and he calls you up. Did he call you up and say—?"

"You know Peter Byrne?" he interrupted me.

"Right."

"Peter was up here a couple of weeks ago, and I talked to him. And he's done a tremendous amount of research on that issue right there. That's his issue. In fact, he went so far to check all the charter outfits."

Ah, I thought, Byrne had read the news story on the Man in the Suit and rushed to Yakima to follow up.

"And I told him the first time he interviewed me three weeks ago, 'I cannot, I cannot remember exactly how it happened.' But at that time, we were using Richardson Aviation to do some charter work. Both of the Richardsons are now dead, and they've been out of business about ten years. But I would lay you odds, knowing my mind and knowing how I operate—I did this all the time. In other words, we were running road construction work all over the state, and if we had a machine break down someplace and had to get it fixed quickly, I would get Ralph Richardson to fly to Portland or Seattle to pick up a part and deliver it to the closest town to where that machine was. So, if—and I did get a call from Roger. I can't recall what time of day or anything else, but I do recall getting a call. And I do recall that he wanted me to finance getting that thing up here and getting it developed. And I did. And I—I just know what I—I—I," he stammered, "would have—what I would have done? I would have called Ralph, who I had credit with, and said, 'Get one of your airplanes, go to Eureka, pick this up, and meet me at Boeing Field, Seattle.' I don't think I'd have him bring it here. That wouldn't be my approach. Peter Byrne found out the film was processed there, he thinks at Technicolor [in Seattle]. . . . He did a lot of research on that, too. But the missing point is, who brought the film up? That's what Byrne is trying to pin down."

"Yeah. Sure." I made a mental note to contact Byrne as soon as possible regarding this supposedly remarkable news—that he knew where the footage was processed.

Al DeAtley looked down at his lap, averting his eyes from mine. "Uh, I can't recall doing that."

That is, he didn't recall how he helped transport the film or where he processed it. I was incredulous. How could DeAtley *not* remember? He knew Patterson was interested in Bigfoot. Patterson often contacted DeAtley, and in 1966 DeAtley gave him money for his book and handed out twenties and fifties on those occasions when he wanted to get rid of him.

"You can't recall receiving the film," I said with surprise, "either if it was sent to Yakima—as Roger told a newspaper reporter—or meeting the film at Boeing Field or someplace in Seattle where Ralph Richardson or some other pilot handed it to you?"

"I can't—I can't recall that," he said, half looking at me. "I can't get it out of my memory banks. They're too flooded back there. Uh, that would be how I would approach it. You know, chartering those planes wasn't that expensive back in those days. Thirty bucks an hour or something. That's probably a ten-hour round trip. So I'm sure that's what I would have done. I do recall getting the projector and showing the film in my basement. That I can recall because that's the first time I saw the film. But I can't recall being in Seattle, whether I drove it over and waited [for the footage to be processed] and brought it back, or whether I met it in Seattle and waited and brought it back. I—I can't recall that. But I can recall showing it." He slapped the table with his hand, and then laughed nervously at his own loss of memory.

"Was that your projector you used?"

He said the only place where he could have rented a sixteen-millimeter projector in Yakima at the time was Sheppard's Camera Shop."

"So when Roger called—"

"What day of the week did Roger call me supposedly?" he asked

"Friday, October 20."

"I would have to rent that on Saturday then," he reflected. "Because they wouldn't be open on Sunday. Yeah, it was shown in my basement on Sunday."

"Right, it was shown on Sunday."

"Because the newspaper man, a friend of mine who I'd known for a long time, I had him come look at it."

"Who was that?" I asked.

He hung his head. Nine seconds passed. To me, it seemed like an awful long time. "I can't remember," DeAtley finally said. Odd, I thought.

DeAtley laughed, surprised at his lack of memory. He thought that the journalist wasn't a reporter. "He married the gal I dated before I dated my wife."

DeAtley said that he assumed that the minute he got home with the developed film he put it in the projector to view it. However, "I can't recall that," he said, "but I'm sure I did. My curiosity would obviously. . . ." He punctuated his statement with tremulous laughter.

It was clear that DeAtley couldn't remember much of anything regarding the film.

"Roger called you from Bluff Creek," I reminded him. "What did he say to you? What was his demeanor, his state of mind? I think he would've been excited."

"I'm sure he was. He—he . . ." He paused. "No, I, I can't recall."

"You can't recall anything that he said?"

"I do not recall. Peter asked me the same question. That does not come up [in his memory]." He looked at me sheepishly. "I don't know," he began. "You guys probably know better than anyone else why some people can remember some things and not others, but . . . I—I can vividly remember, you know, Green, I think, was in my basement. Some of those Canadian guys, or another guy from Canada. I can't think of his name, it's a funny name."

"Rene Dahinden?"

"Rene, I think he was there. Uh. . . ."

I asked, "When you saw this footage for the first time, what did you feel? What did you think?"

He inhaled deeply through his nose. He seemed uncomfortable. "Did it—did it make me a believer?"

For a moment, I felt I had asked a question he had never anticipated.

"Did you think it was just a peculiar thing you were looking at?" I asked. "It's a jerky piece of film. It's not the greatest piece of footage. When you were looking at this thing walking, did you feel anything about it, or just kind of think, 'Well, looks like Roger got something on film'?"

DeAtley hesitated for seven seconds. He moved uneasily in his chair. He glanced away. "I can't recall," he said in a small voice. "It doesn't come up."

"No?"

"I just can't recall what feelings I had. Obviously he had something on film. Obviously it looked. . . . To somebody like me, it looked legitimate. Shit, I didn't know."

I thought, If DeAtley had immediately viewed the film in his basement, it seemed logical to me that he would have remembered his reaction. But he remembered nothing.

"I'm not an expert in any of that stuff," he cautioned.

"When did Roger actually return home?"

He shifted in his chair. "No, I don't remember." Patterson was young and had no money, De Atley said; it wouldn't have been unusual for Patterson to drive straight through the night to get home. DeAtley and Patterson had driven straight through when they went to California.

I was determined to cover every conceivable action of Patterson. "Did he come to your house with Bob Gimlin when he first came home, or by himself? Do you remember?"

"I do not."

"What did he say when he first met you at the door?"

DeAtley thought for a while. He couldn't remember except that the Bigfoot hunters started showing up. "A whole shitload of 'em, you know. Roger put out the message quickly." He inhaled. "I—I was, again, kind of an investor. I was kind of the guy setting around wondering what the fuck's with me. . . . You know, where's it gonna go from here?"

I challenged him: "You just said you were an investor, and you said a moment ago you really didn't invest anything."

"Well, obviously I invested in getting the film up here," he explained without flinching.

"OK."

"I did that. I was, you know. . . . Was I excited? Probably yes. I cannot specifically recall. It would be speculation, total speculation. I cannot specifically recall."

"Did they look at the film in the basement?"

"Yeah. That's where I put it on a big screen."

I asked, "Do you remember Jim McClarin?"

"I remember the name. I don't put a face to him."

I said, "Green told me that Roger and you viewed the film first by yourselves in the basement—"

"Could be."

"—and then the other guys were invited down."

"Could have been," he agreed.

"You don't remember that?"

"Not at all."

I smiled to myself. "The Bigfoot researchers . . . they were excited?"

"Oh, yeah. Something that they had been laughed at [about]. You know, their attitude was they'd been ridiculed, and I was one of the biggest ridiculers [*sic*], quite frankly. So now they had proof. They were very, very excited."

"What did they say? Do you remember any conversations?"

He sucked in air. "I really can't. Oh, I remember. I recall Roger went into complete detail of how hard his heart was beating and all the rest, giving them a blow by blow of it, you know. All about how it all happened."

I looked down at my sheet of questions. "According to Green, Roger was saying he wanted to immediately go and sell it. And the researchers were saying that he should let investors or buyers come to him, not him go out and find—"

"Oh, there was modest speculation that way," said DeAtley. "I mean, shit, Roger was a multimillionaire now. He'd hit his home run."

"In his mind he had become a millionaire?"

"Yeah, he was having a ball. He thought he had the home run. Yes, sir."

"Did you think he had hit the home run?"

"No," he replied. "At that point, I, I—I was speculating myself on the fact that—and I never asked the question because I didn't want to know the answer—that he did believe in Bigfoot. As a person that's very, very cautious, I'm constantly trying to figure out what's the ulterior motive. And at that point I was as skeptical as I had ever been. Then, I thought, Maybe this was something less than totally true. Roger certainly had the artistic talents, if he wanted to fake something. He certainly was talented enough . . . to probably pull that off. If he wanted to build a suit, he probably was artistic and talented enough to do that. He was a deep thinker, so if he was going to do that, he would definitely make it [the footage] grainy. He'd definitely make it jump around. He would anticipate those things. I turned the corner on it at the Yerkes Primate Center, where we were sometime that winter in Atlanta, Georgia, and all these big-shot scientists there viewed the film and they bought it hook, line, and sinker."

As the February 1968 edition of *Argosy* magazine reported, sometime between Thanksgiving 1967 and February 1968, *Argosy* had paid for two showings of the footage in front of scientists in Washington, DC, and at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University, Atlanta. Patterson accompanied DeAtley. "And Bob Gimlin was with us, too. There was some big guy in New York City, I can't remember his name now, but some old guffer who had a PhD in animalistic shit. And he was kind of the Bigfoot godfather. He done research in—what do they call them over in Europe? . . . yetis—they climb around on some mountainous area. He bought it. Uh, so I believed, I should say I started to believe. It definitely walked like a man and not like a woman, even though it had breasts, supposedly. I had trouble defining it myself. I had difficulties deciding whether they [Bigfoot] were or they weren't. And so then I quit believing again. So I never asked Roger the question, 'cause I didn't want to know."

Because I didn't want to know. Yet, I thought, DeAtley was willing to promote what he suspected was a hoax.

I put my pen down and sat forward, joining my hands together on the table top. "You're saying at some point you looked at the footage and at that point you began to really ask yourself, 'Could this be an authentic piece of film?' You laid out some reasons why perhaps it wasn't: Roger was artistic, was a deep thinker, Roger could make a suit. These are things you just told me."

"Right."

I looked at him sharply. "When did you think it wasn't authentic?"

"When I first saw it," he said without hesitation.

"When you first saw it in the basement by yourself?"

"I can't say it was by myself or with him," he replied.

"During that Sunday?"

"Oh, yeah. And I wasn't a believer. I couldn't believe, as inhabited as America is, that they've never found any dung, any bones, never found any solid, scientific evidence. That's me. Like I say, the only one thing I believe in that's not scientific is the Lord."

"You thought to yourself, Roger Patterson, himself, could have faked it?"

"Well, of course he could have," he said. "I'm not saying he did, I just—"

I persisted. "No, but I'm saying, that when you were looking at the film, you didn't think someone *other than* Roger faked it. Roger *could have* faked it. Right?"

"Oh, I never thought about anybody else faking it."

When DeAtley went on the road with the footage to New York City and Atlanta, he had apparently changed his mind regarding its authenticity.

I said, "Academics, so-called experts, were looking at it were starting to think, 'This could be real.'"

"I—I—I," he stuttered. "It crossed my mind. I—I—I never really. . . . Was there ever a minute in my life that I really believed there was a Bigfoot out there? Probably not. Never, ever. Did I have twinges of maybes? Yeah. Then the experts saw it. In those days I was pretty young. Nineteen sixty-seven. That's thirty-three years ago. Thirty-three years ago I believed my government was the best." Disgust invaded his voice. "I still believed that there wasn't a crooked cop. I still believed politicians were really serving our best needs and interests."

He said that in 1962 he and his wife adopted a three-month-old baby boy, the offspring of a white mother and a black father. The mother was a cocaine addict. The adoption process included an examination performed by the University of Washington's school of anthropology. Scientists measured the boy's head, limbs, and other body parts. They wrote a report that stated that he boy was one-half African pigmy and one-half Asian. He laughed. "I believed it. They said he's gonna grow up and weigh one hundred and thirty-five pounds and stand about 5'5". He grew up to weigh two hundred and five pounds and 6'1"." He chuckled.

"So, the reason I'm telling the story is that back in those days . . . those academias [*sic*], PhDs, was a big deal to me. I mean, them sons-of-bitches were smart, and they got it right, all the time. So when these big researchers at the Yerkes Primate Center and this other guy in New York said that the film definitely was authentic, it still didn't convince me. I'd almost start believing it, and then I'd go through my checklist. There were no bones. We've found bones [from animals] that have been extinct for thousands of years. How could we have missed this [Bigfoot bones]? How can we? The western United States is inhabited, unbelievable. Since I build all the roads in those mountains. . . . I mean, there's not any unchartered shit left out there. So, my disbelief come back in. So, did I really ever believe? No."

"You really don't believe in Bigfoot, irrespective of the footage?"

"Absolutely," DeAtley stated. "Today, through the labors of life, I do know there are bad cops. I do know politicians work for themselves." He laughed in derision. "Some people call me cynical. Some of us just call it growing up, you finally catch on. [In 1967] I was starting to think about becoming a believer, and then, checking out my questions, I'd become a disbeliever again. Obviously, being a businessman, I saw some economic benefit to not wanting to know, not needing to know, and going forward—"

Roger Patterson's Bigfoot film caused such a sensation in 1967 that Patterson (*right*) was invited to appear on a popular television talk show, the *Joey Bishop Show,* in New York City. Al DeAtley paid all of Patterson's expenses. Courtesy of Pat Mason.

"Bigfoot Enterprises?" I asked.

"Sure."

As a test, I asked him if he formed Bigfoot Enterprises *after* the footage was taken. The papers reported the date as November 1, 1967. If Bigfoot Enterprises was formed *before* October 20, I would suspect a hoax.

"I'm 99 percent sure that it was after the film," he said. "In October [1967] going through that winter, Roger was asked to go on the *Joey Bishop Show*, I think in New York. So who had to finance that trip?" he asked in irritation. "I did."

By that time, he said, the Yerkes Primate Center was favorable toward the footage, and *Reader's Digest* was interested in doing an article on Bigfoot and the film. "I saw possible economic gain," said DeAtley. "So I said, 'I'm putting all the bulls on this subject. Let's structure up something.' I'm a business man. I have a tendency to always sign a contract before I start anything; and if I don't have a contract, I don't start it. So with my insistence, we formed it."

Actually, it was *after* DeAtley "structured up" Bigfoot Enterprises that Yerkes primatologists took an interest in the film and *Reader's Digest* printed the article.

I wanted to make absolutely certain whether or not DeAtley put any stock in the authenticity of the footage. Did he or did he not believe the film showed a real Bigfoot?

"I didn't believe it," he said. "I was a nonbeliever."

"But eleven days after Roger shot the film," I said, "Bigfoot Enterprises was formed. So your motivation was that regardless of whether it was real or not—"

"I didn't really give a shit," he said without equivocation.

"You're a businessman. Invest money, and there's a return on your investment."

"Exactly. That's what I told Byrne, and that's what I told the Yakima paper. I was money-motivated. Whether they existed or didn't exist, I couldn't care less."

I asked DeAtley why, as a businessman, he invested in the film, especially since he had loaned Patterson money earlier for the angora goats project, which Patterson abandoned.

"We never had any paperwork on that [the angora goats]," he said. However, with the footage, things were different. First, there was "a third party," and the footage had potentially more return on his investment. "With the goats, I primarily wanted to get my money back. This one, I—I—I thought there could be some money in it, which there was."

"There was a third person?"

"I think Gimlin was part of it."

"Think" seemed a peculiar choice of words. Obviously, I thought, DeAtley knows Gimlin was a partner in Bigfoot Enterprises. After Patterson died, Gimlin sued DeAtley to get his share of the profits generated by the footage.

I acted dumb. "Gimlin was part of Bigfoot Enterprises?"

"And I didn't know Gimlin from a bale of hay, you know."

"But you probably knew him before the twentieth of October? Wasn't he hanging around with Roger?"

"I didn't hang around with Roger," he said quickly.

"But you said you saw buddies hanging around Roger, bullshitting about Bigfoot, so. . . ."

"I'm not—I'm not," he said, then: "See, I can't say whether that was before or after the film. I don't think I met any of those gentlemen, any of those Bigfoot guys, until after the film. In my mind, I never met any of them until after the twenty-second of October."

DeAtley was wrong. If he was talking about Green, Dahinden, and the Bigfooters, he had met them *on* October 22—in his own house. Perhaps he meant to say he had never met "those gentlemen" until after October 20.

Turning back to Bigfoot Enterprises, I reminded DeAtley that Bigfoot Enterprises was formed near Hollywood, the entertainment capital of the world.

"I was buying airline tickets," said DeAtley. "I was doing the whole thing."

DeAtley explained that shortly after the footage was taken, Patterson appeared on a late-night talk show in Los Angeles. Apparently, the show had got wind of Patterson's footage and invited him on as a guest.

"Roger knew somebody or something," smiled DeAtley. "Somebody knew somebody in that typical Roger world. Whether it was Roger or Gimlin, it sure wasn't me. We met with a younger man when we first got there. I think he worked for Universal Studios, and he put us together with this press agent, . . . had this big press conference. He wanted an arm and a leg for it. I went along with it. We had it at Gene Autry's hotel on Sunset Boulevard. Anyway, a producer—Aaron Spelling?—was considering to make us an offer. That's probably why we hired an attorney there at that time, because we were getting close to what we thought might be a home run. I was writing all the checks to get this thing done, so I might have just said, 'Let's just document it up here, and I'll pay the bill for it.'"

DeAtley and Patterson stayed in Los Angeles a week and a half.

I knew from my research that DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin sought the stamp of approval for the film from scientists and journalists at the University of British Columbia museum in Vancouver and in New York and Atlanta.

"How did you end up going to New York?" I returned to my doodling.

His elbow resting on the arm of the chair, he rested his chin in his palm and thought. "I remember having to buy Gimlin and Roger new clothes. You know, sports jackets and slacks, new cowboy boots. It was the dead of winter, too, just colder than hell in New York. And again, I think the *Joey Bishop Show*, or whatever show, was the key that got us back there."

Actually, it was *Life* magazine that took the three men to New York City.

I scanned down my questions. DeAtley was answering many of them, unprompted. "Do you remember a party in New York to generate interest in the footage from investors? Gimlin was dressed up like an Indian."

He scratched his cheek with his index finger, thinking. "No."

I described the cover of *Argosy* showing Gimlin in full Indian regalia.

"I can't recall that. I can't say it didn't happen, but I can't recall that."

I crossed off the question and asked the next question on my list. "Was the objective of Bigfoot Enterprises to produce films?"

"Well, the first product that was developed was Northwest Research—"

Ah, Mason had talked about Northwest Research, as had the *Reader's Digest* article.

"—which was just a facet of somebody's imagination," he grinned slyly, "be it mine, Roger's, or Gimlin's. But Roger was on these shows, both the L.A. show and the New York show. . . . 'For further information, please contact Northwest Research,' duh-duh-duh-da. I mean, Jesus Christ, truckloads of this shit come in! I mean, it was unbelievable." His lips parted and his yellow teeth showed themselves.

"Inquiries?" I asked. "So you helped to set up Northwest Research?" I heard myself laughing at the name. I had always thought that "Northwest Research" sounded like a gimmick. "What was the street address?" I asked.

"Street address was my office," he laughed. "The paving company."

"Was Northwest Research Roger's idea?"

"It might have been me. I don't recall."

"What was the point of Northwest Research?" I asked.

"To make money," he said in a flat voice.

"What were you going to sell—a newsletter, magazine, films?"

"The book. And quarterly newsletters on continued research. I think the authenticity was good. 'Northwest Research' sounded good." His lips twisted into an ironic smile. "The picture of the office on the brochure we sent out was the office of Yakima Valley Junior College, the president of the junior college's office here in town! It shows his library."

A laugh burst forth from me as I pictured DeAtley, a private businessman, using the office of a state-funded educational institution to promote a "scientific" organization that had no scientists. "The president's office?" I said.

"Yeah, with Roger sitting behind the desk." He laughed in rapid bursts. "It was a very impressive office."

Publicity about Northwest Research generated responses from the public. "What happened when we got all these goddanged letters in, all of a sudden there's a hell of an expense now." He shook his head. "Now we've got to send them something. We hired a bunch of temp girls—like ten or fifteen. There was a pickup load of mail coming in every day. So we had to print up the first letter and brochure, and buy all the rest of the stuff. Well, a lot of them came back again with money in 'em. So we sold a bunch of stuff there and made a few bucks. I think I just about got cleaned on all the original investment. But as that was going down, and we obviously didn't have enough money to put out the second letter, the BBC came over."

The BBC didn't pay DeAtley and Patterson any money, DeAtley said. Instead, the BBC gave them, free, a master copy of the documentary to use as long as it wasn't shown on national television in the United States.

"Before we finaled that deal," DeAtley explained, "Roger's pot of gold was quickly melting down. Spelling backed off from doing it for Hollywood and for television. No offers came out of California. So when the BBC offer came, why, well, you know, they're gonna show it once in the United Kingdom, but at least we got a film, we got the start of one. And our thought at that time was to expand it into a useable wildlife film with heavy promotions. We got the master, and Roger had already virtually written the script and everything to embellish it, to extend it."

The film opens with a shot of the Northwest Research "office," DeAtley said. And here was DeAtley, posing as the "executive director" of Northwest Research. Hmm, I thought, wouldn't DeAtley, then, be sitting behind the junior college president's desk, not Patterson?

"I yakked for five minutes to fill some time. My spiel was about continuing to look for Bigfoot. Duh-duh, duh-duh, duh-da. We were trying to make it into a commercial thing you could take into movie theaters. We had a local guy shoot it for us. We spent about five days in his office in Seattle. His office was upstairs in his house. The guy didn't bathe, and he stunk of body odor," DeAtley added with a grimace. "But he did a good job. It was commercially acceptable to take into movie theaters." The finished film included parts of the BBC footage and footage that Roger had shot.

I decided to surprise DeAtley to see how much direct involvement he had in the edited film. "What were the pieces you put in there?"

"Well, Roger did it," he said softly. "I just paid the bill."

DeAtley said that *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazine had written about the footage. "We used that for authenticity," DeAtley said. The film also included an interview with the primatologist in New York and the Yerkes Primate Center scientists.

As DeAtley was speaking, I remembered the documentary Roger was shooting near Tampico in late spring 1967. Was DeAtley aware of that documentary "in progress"? I named all the men I knew so far who had participated in the project. "Have you ever heard of Jerry Merritt?" I tossed out.

DeAtley hesitated. "It—it doesn't ring a bell, but that—I'm not good at names anyway, so. . . ."

"Are you sure?" I thought it unlikely that DeAtley wouldn't have known about Roger's documentary.

After thinking, he finally said, "Unless part of this movie was shot up there, I don't know. No, I . . . again I wasn't. . . ."

"Let's just put it this way," I said. "Patterson was shooting footage near the South Fork of the Ahtanum Road with all his buddies who either believed in Bigfoot or thought they'd believe in Bigfoot because they felt Roger was going to become a millionaire."

"There was part of that going on," he admitted. "I forgot about that."

I asked him if the footage Patterson had shot on the South Fork was put into the edited BBC documentary.

"Now wait a minute. No, no, no, no," he stopped me. "I think I've got you misinformed. I didn't do any of this."

"Any of this?"

DeAtley explained that Patterson alone hired a cameraman and the Seattle film editor. DeAtley gained access to the Yakima Junior College where he played the role of executive director of Northwest Research, and he participated in the film editing in Seattle, over a four- to five-day period. In fact, he paid the cameraman and the film editor $3,600. But the only footage DeAtley ever saw was the footage of himself. "I was not in the other footage," he emphasized, that is, the footage shot near the South Fork.

"Roger probably acted as a writer and director," DeAtley speculated. DeAtley explained that the film edited in Seattle included interviews with Bigfoot hunters. "But I was not involved in any of that," he stressed. "I was a busy person at the time, so I just did a little portion."

The movie, finished in the fall of 1968, was one hundred and thirty-six minutes long. It was called *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman*. Then, the Olson brothers, sons of Frank Olson, one of the founders of American National Enterprises (ANE), contacted Patterson and DeAtley. The brothers lived in Eugene, Oregon. ANE was a distributor of popular wildlife films and was an expert in "four-walling." DeAtley met with elderly members of the Olson family, in their sixties. They had no interest in the film. "They thought it was a fake and a bunch of bullshit," said DeAtley. However, their sons, in their mid-twenties, seized on the film as an opportunity; they had "a long-range program" to market it.

Taking advantage of the Olsons' experience in four-walling, DeAtley advertised the film on TV and radio in southern Oregon for a week, then premiered it in a high school auditorium on a Sunday afternoon in Lakeview, Oregon. "Three showings," DeAtley said, "and every one of them was sold out. We turned people away. Like, we had 80 percent of the population of the area show up."

DeAtley stood up and retrieved an atlas from his office. He flipped to a map of the Northwest. He drew the nail of his thumb down Interstate 5 running from Portland, Oregon, to the California border. He showed the movie in theaters all along the Interstate 5 corridor, he said. "Very high promotion. Lots of ads. Total saturation. It was the greatest thing that's ever been, and they've never been hit that hard with advertising before."

Eventually, DeAtley and Patterson had thirty-eight prints of the film to show in theaters. In the Portland area they rented nearly every theater based on a percentage of the total population in the area. "With wildlife films," he explained, "you have to have enough seats to push it and get out." Using sixteen-millimeter projectors, the highest quality they could rent, they showed the film, on average, about four days in each theater. They took their earnings in cash.

Viale and Terry Thompson, sons of Phyllis Thompson, Roger Patterson's oldest sister, went on the road as "show hosts." The Thompson brothers had worked for DeAtley starting in high school, working in DeAtley's shop in the summer, making a little money cleaning parts and sweeping floors. Viale and Terry set up and ran the projectors.

DeAtley laid his thumb on southern Oregon. After the overwhelming Lakeview, Oregon, success, the Olson brothers offered to promote *Bigfoot* nationwide through their well-established distribution network. But DeAtley decided, "Bullshit on these guys. We'll just do it ourselves. They'd given me the whole recipe."

In January 1969, DeAtley and Patterson started showing the movie outside the Northwest. They took it to Roosevelt, Idaho. "Was extremely successful," DeAtley said proudly. "We took it to Utah, but most of the theaters were owned by one outfit, and they blocked us out. They wouldn't let us have Salt Lake. So we took the Salt Palace. We rented the Salt Palace on a Sunday. We didn't know any different, didn't realize that Mormons aren't supposed to go to movies on Sunday. They're not supposed to do anything on Sunday. They gave it to us at a bargain basement deal because they thought it was going to die. And that was the most nerve-racking day of my life when we put it on. We went out and hit the outside markets early, and we hit Salt Lake on Sunday for three showings. We ordered a special screen in from California that got lost someplace on the truck coming over. We're staying in a Holiday motel, and I had one of the maids from the motel go home and sew two king-size sheets together, and then I went to the Salt Palace and built me a screen. I stretched the wrinkles out by poking holes through the sheets and using rubber-bands on nails on the sides, hoisted that son-of-a-bitch up, tilted her back a little bit and took a sixteen-millimeter and shot it at it. They even gave us the parking concession at the Salt Palace. We played two weeks after Simon and Garfunkel. We took more money out of the building in one day than they did. We took $84,000 out of the building. Three showings in one day!" He sat back abruptly, his mouth spread in a huge grin.

"*Unbelievable!*" he thundered. "Now we thought, 'This is good!' A lot of expenses, 'though. Television ain't cheap. But it was rollin', . . . really starting to make money." He began animated, squirming in his chair. He flipped to a full map of the United States in the atlas. His finger began moving east. "We went over to Denver, Colorado, and hit that TV market. Fabulous. Nebraska! Nebraska feeds both North and South Dakota. It's all one market through here. Fabulous! Now we get into early March. We got up here in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and that's one market up there, one humongous market. Theaters up there are all controlled by a big theater chain, and they doubled our rent on us, 'cause they saw what we were doing. So they just jacked it to our ass. But we still had profit, we still were OK. We bought all the TV ads, paid for all of them, all that stuff is paid in advance. Fortunately, by now it was not my money. It was *the* money. About a week before we opened—you're committed to every dime, every dime is already spent—before we opened in here, the year before all the fairs and every god-damned little town had a frozen Bigfoot in it. It proved to be a hoax. It broke about a week before we broke." He bellowed laughter, falling back. "*We died!*"

He was referring to the Minnesota Iceman. As John Napier in his book *Bigfoot* tells it, starting in the summer of 1967, one Frank D. Hansen, a Minnesota farmer, toured carnivals with a purported unknown "hominid" encased in a block of ice. In April of 1969, Hansen admitted to a reporter with the *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, Minnesota, that the Iceman was a model made in Hollywood.[3]

"Took all the fun out of it," DeAtley said as he shook his head and rolled his lower lip into a pout. "We spent most of the money we'd made. We came out all right. *One hundred thousand bucks.* We lost one hundred thousand bucks in there, and we were up to about two hundred thousand before we went in there. If we'd have known that, we wouldn't have gone there."

"So that's what ended your tour?" I asked.

He slid the open atlas aside. "Well, that. And it had to end because of timing. In other words, high-promotion motion pictures in those days would only work in January, February, March. Cheap TV, cheap ratings, and snowy grounds. You know, noncompetition. Who's your competition in these markets? College basketball during that period. And pro basketball wasn't doing any good anyway."

DeAtley was running the operation, buying advertising, hiring thirty people to operate the projectors, renting gymnasiums at high schools, traveling on the road. The operators would sell the tickets and steal part of the earnings; or wouldn't show up, or if they did, they'd show up drunk.

"Roger come to me in the spring of 1969—and said, 'Al, I want you to sign off, I want the whole thing.' Obviously Roger was anticipating income out of it. I told him if he could find somebody else, I would release my share. I had 50 percent ownership. Gimlin had gone bye-bye. I don't know when he left or under what conditions. He just all of a sudden wasn't around any more. I understood that Gimlin's wife wasn't too happy with all of this shit. I think she put her foot down and said, 'Enough's enough.' So, I ran it, and then I'd give the money to Roger. I'd split the profits with him. And so I got my money back, plus maybe seventy-five thousand bucks from the whole damn deal. I was at a road meeting in Seattle when I got the call from him. He said he'd found somebody, and I said, 'Go for it.'"

That "somebody" was ANE.

"Were you involved in connecting ANE up with him, or helping him make this deal with ANE?" I asked.

"No. It was Roger who had the deal. And I knew—we all knew—he was dying, and I had no real reason to go out there again. It was an experience. I had fun. [But] it wasn't my lifestyle. I don't like living away from home, because what I was doing I was spending all winter on this and working eighty hours a week in the summer time in the construction business. It had a strain on my marriage, 'cause I was gone the whole winter. I like my winters to spend with my kids skiing and stuff. They were still in high school, and so I said, 'Fine.' So I just sent him a release. End of story."

"It just wasn't a business venture that you wanted to continue with?" I said.

"That's absolutely correct. I had no interest in it. I didn't believe in it. It—it—it gnawed at my conscience some." He looked uncomfortable. "Because if I was ever interviewed or talked to anybody, I had to portray myself as a believer."

"And you were kind of portraying yourself that way—?"

"Of course," he freely admitted.

"—as the director for Northwest Research?"

"Of course. Of course," he said. "I didn't lie. I mean, I never just told outright lies or anything. It's—it's—it's like today. . . . Would you like to be a cigarette salesman? Wouldn't that gnaw at you? You know what I'm saying? I think that's what was gnawing at me. I didn't believe. I'm kind of living a fake world, and the fun wore off, you know. You'd pour money over your body from a trash can a time or two, but then it's not funny after that. You give it to an accountant to put it in the bank like anything else."

"Right."

"So you did profit?"

"Oh, yeah." He steered me away from the subject of money. "Roger was so sick. The Salt Lake show in 1969 was the last show I ever took him out to. When he came to Salt Lake, he didn't sleep much. He was there, I think, two, three days, and he was up all night. You know, he had Hodgkin's disease, and we used to pump him up big. We'd bring him in early. He'd be on all the talk shows, the news shows, and everything in the local markets, and get a lot of free shit. But he was just so sick at the last that we lost that, and that hurt us, too. And then the Salt Lake show, he'd get up to give a little speech before and get everybody kind of jacked up."

"I understand he came out wearing all black and a black cowboy hat, and there were Bigfoot casts on the stage."

"He was a good speaker," DeAtley said approvingly. "He was the talk of the town, the biggest advertised thing the town had ever seen."

DeAtley slid down in his chair and nestled his chin in his hand.

"He lived with my wife and I and the kids for about a year before he died because he was so sick. We were with him when he died. He was a young man."

DeAtley turned somber. "My wife probably spent more time there [at the hospital] than Patricia did. Their marriage wasn't very good. He was a ladies' man. Patricia knew it. She was a lot younger than him. He was twenty-two, and she was fifteen when they got married. Her dad was a very good provider, typical worker bee–type guy. Roger was just completely the opposite, but she loved Roger. I'm not saying she didn't. But at the time Roger was dying, I think we all felt her need was more to make sure the kids were going to get through it. And then my wife and I would make sure Roger got through it."

He paused. "An interesting anecdote about him," he went on. "The night before he died, he called me and said he had to see me right away. He was in the hospital. He said, 'Al, I can't breathe. But if you make me a footstool with a piece of plywood that will go down behind the bed, then build a stool out so long like this.' And he showed me. 'And pad that so I can put my feet on it, I can keep myself up far enough I can breathe.' So I went to the shop, got the shop foreman out, and we got the plywood out, and we made this thing. Had a hell of a time smuggling that in the hospital. I started through the front door and said, 'No, no, no, no.' I put it in a pillowcase, worked it around, and finally got it in there for him." He chuckled softly.

"The night before he died, he was still creative enough to figure out how to make this thing. It showed his desire to live. He never really accepted he was dying." DeAtley's mouth drew down. "He died the next afternoon, late afternoon. The last money I gave him was when he found this cure-all grape deal in Mexico, and he went to Mexico. That was the last couple thousand bucks I gave him. But if you're dying, and your doctors here say you're dying, why not try? By that time, my financial condition had improved some, so. . . ."

DeAtley glanced at his watch. I checked the tape and then I ran my eyes down the sheet, crossing off questions that DeAtley had answered.

Now was the time to ask the challenging questions. I said, "There's been a question raised about Roger's honesty and truthfulness. Did you ever hear of any stories of Roger Patterson faking Bigfoot evidence?" I tightened my jaw and looked at his eyes.

"Never did."

"In the Ahtanum Valley area or any place?"

"Never did."

"Because I've been hearing stories about him faking Bigfoot footprints."

"I never knew there were any Bigfoot prints around this area. I never remember Roger having claimed he saw any Bigfoot prints except the ones he cast in Northern California."

I asked him what he thought about the recent story of the alleged Man in the Suit.

His eyes widened, and he smiled pleasantly. "Of course, I left town right when that was supposed to hit, and I never did hear, I don't know what happened."

"Well, he hasn't told his story yet," I said, smiling back at him.

He laughed. "I went out of town on a convention for ten days. And I told my gardener, 'Leave the newspaper 'cause I want to follow that story.' When I came home, it was all quiet. So I didn't know what the hell happened."

I looked into DeAtley's eyes again and said, "Have you ever heard over the years, when you knew Roger, of anyone who was wearing some kind of suit and running around out in the Ahtanum Valley area?"

"No."

"Never heard any story about that?"

"No," he said.

"Because I'm picking up stories."

"Again. . . ." DeAtley fell silent. Four seconds passed. His voice was low when he spoke: "Roger was very thorough. If . . . if Roger did fake this . . . if he *did*, they're only the three people that know. That was him and Gimlin, and whoever was in the suit, if Gimlin wasn't in the suit. . . ."

"Roger would know," I said smiling. "The guy in the suit would know. . . ."

"And that could have been Gimlin . . . could have been. The footage shows the creature only. So Gimlin could have been in that suit, in my mind."

"That's a theory," I said, nodding.

"Knowing Roger, if it was, Gimlin was. Think about it. . . ." He leaned forward and lay his workman's hands on the table and opened their palms to me. "You're setting out and gonna fake this footage. Right? How many people are going to know about it? You know, they say the only secrets that are ever safe is with two people and one of them is dead." He laughed. "Right?"

I nodded.

"Well, any good head would say, two. If you're gonna do something like this, you'd make it short and sweet as he did, very limited, and it would be shaky like he was falling off his horse, which he claims he was, or his horse rearing, or whatever. Knowing Roger as I know Roger, he would have thought that through carefully, and I've never doubted him. My speculation is on Gimlin. So I found this new story with a lot of interest, because why would he have a third person at all? No reason."

"So if Roger faked it," I said, "it would have been Roger and one other guy, and that would be it?"

"Why not? Roger's . . ." He hesitated. "He's a smart enough guy. He wouldn't get three people involved. Every good conspiracy that ever went on is two people. In all of our business dealings, we try to make it so it takes three people to steal. And three people steal, one didn't get as good of a deal as he thinks, so he's going to turn the other two in." He chortled. "So that's our check and balance system. In all business things you've got to have a conspiracy of three, not two. So, when the story come out about the third guy, I laughed about it. That's bullshit . . . That wouldn't fit Roger's process as I know Roger. Because Roger's the type of guy, you know, if he eats medium eggs versus large eggs, it's going to do something to him. In other words, he calculated everything out. He ate nuts and honey, and he ate raw oats. Everything was done for a reason. He wouldn't have three. There's no reason to have three. You see my point? That's why I followed that story with great enthusiasm."

"Right," I said, momentarily hypnotized by DeAtley's description of business dealings.

"Like I said," DeAtley said, "anybody who was in that suit . . . was Gimlin."

"In your opinion?"

"I would bet an awful lot of money on that one." He burst into laughter.

"Are you telling me that you know that?"

"No! No." He closed his hands and leaned back. "I mean, I—I thought about asking, and I—I—I didn't want to ask. For two reasons."

"That's puzzling." I raised my voice, instilling in it enough irritation to get a rise from DeAtley: "Why didn't you want to ask him? Why didn't you just turn to Roger and say, 'Did you hoax this movie, Roger?'"

"Well. . . ."

"You know what kind of guy he was. He was creative and artistic."

Damn. Suddenly the recorder clicked. The tape had run out! I was missing DeAtley's answer. I flipped the cassette over and picked up the thread: "You're saying you're not sure Roger would tell you the truth?"

"Yeah, I'm not sure he would," he agreed. "And I had a relationship with Roger that I didn't want to believe he was lying to me, you know. So why ask the question? There was no reason to ask."

I responded, "But you said earlier in this interview that it did pass through your mind on the Sunday that you were looking at this footage in your basement, maybe Roger faked this."

"Of course."

"Right?"

"Yeah," DeAtley said.

"You pretty much concluded that after all of these years Bigfoot doesn't exist."

"Yeah. And I didn't believe it existed then."

I pressed on him. "But you, yourself, looking at that footage, what do you conclude? Do you think it's more likely a hoax?"

"I believe it was a hoax, of course. Because my brain kicks in and says, Where's the bones? Where's the carcass? There's got to be—just can't—it just doesn't sound scientifically reasonable, the western United States where I've built all these roads for all these years, that this could possibly be."

I wanted the most definitive answer DeAtley could give me, from his own lips. I spun a scenario for him. "If I came back a year from now and said, 'Do you think that footage is a hoax?'—if no new information arose about it—would you say, 'Yeah, it's most likely a hoax'?"

"I've said that from day one. I don't believe. I've never—I don't think I've said, 'It's a hoax.' What I've always said is that I don't believe they exist."

"But do you think the footage is a hoax?" I persisted. I felt anger rising in my throat.

"Well, if I don't believe they exist. . . ."

"Then you believe it is a hoax?" I said once again.

"The only alternative is that," he said calmly. "When people say they saw a Bigfoot in the woods—da-duh, da-duh, da-duh—I'm not saying they're lying. They might have thought they'd seen one. That's a little different than filming one."

How many ways could I ask him? "Right. So the chances are more likely in your mind that that footage, taken on October 20, 1967, is a hoax, than it is of a real Bigfoot?"

"No, no, no," he said quickly. "You're trying to tell me—you're asking me if I think it's a hoax. I'm just telling you I don't know whether it's a hoax or not. I don't believe in Bigfoot. It could be a Bigfoot. I don't believe yet. Now you're gonna have to find me some bones, you're gonna have to find me some meat, you know. You're gonna have to show me more evidence."

I inhaled and controlled my mounting frustration. "Is it fair to say that until there's *actual* evidence that's satisfactory to established science that Bigfoot exists—until that evidence comes forth—this footage in your mind is a hoax?"

"Because I don't believe there are any Bigfoot. Yeah." He paused. "Even if they found bones, that doesn't mean this is authentic either."

"That the footage is authentic either?"

"Yeah. It doesn't mean it's authentic. Knowing Roger as I know Roger, he would not think it—even though he loved this phenomenon, he believed in this phenomenon, no doubt about it—but I don't think he would claim it to be morally wrong to fake it, to make enough money to prove it. He wouldn't fake it for the profit of faking it, because he believed too much. And he didn't take any of the money he made and increase the standard of living for him or his children. He spent it all on proving it."

In short, I summarized in my mind, Roger Patterson could have faked the film footage to make money to further his own efforts to prove the existence of

Bigfoot. It was an interesting theory, painting Patterson as a hoaxer who had a greater good in mind when he deceived the public, which seemed a strong possibility. The problem I had with DeAtley's theory was that Patterson appeared to be, from what I inferred from my interviews to this point, a cheat in dealings with people. Based on the many interviews I had done to date, Patterson was more than happy to live off of other people's money. He had also been arrested for grand larceny.

I said, "So, one theory could be that he actually created this hoax in order to generate income for the love of his subject?"

He nodded. "To pay—to generate the income to where he'd have enough money to hire enough people to prove that they're there."

"I see. I see."

"That's my belief. I have never known Roger to be a crook. The only time I've ever known Roger to lie was about extramarital situations."

I felt ire burning in my chest, but I fumed silently. However, the fact remained that so many people in Yakima, independent of each other, stated unequivocally that Roger Patterson had basically been a crook. I eyed my final questions and then looked up at DeAtley. "Were you aware that he was arrested for stealing the camera that he took down to California?"

"No." He start laughing, loud and hard.

"Is that a new piece of information for you?"

He paused. "Yeah, I didn't know that."

I found this unbelievable. "You're telling me the truth now?"

"Oh, absolutely," he smiled genially. "Greg, I have no reason to lie. I had no reason to give you this interview if I was gonna sit here and lie to you. I'm not saying I didn't know it then, but it startles me now because I—I—I lay you odds he rented it and just didn't take it back or something."

"Well, that's basically what happened," I said.

"Well, that's Roger," he said philosophically. "I mean, he's an artist, you know. He didn't break in the window and steal it and run out the door, right?" He smiled.

"He rented it properly."

"And didn't take it back," DeAtley said.

"Well, he just kind of 'forgot,'" I said, smiling.

He laughed. "That doesn't surprise me at all. I'm not sure he kept track of who he owed money to, either. He kind of figured it was their problem to keep track of that." He laughed again.

I didn't find it very funny. "Right." I turned somber and said with deep seriousness, "A couple last questions." I could see from the expression on DeAtley's face, the hardening of his mouth, that he knew it was coming: the Big Question. "Obviously one reason for the interest in Roger Patterson is the footage. I have to ask you this question."

"But," he inserted, "I'm not the one to, uh, to—to—to lead it either way because I have no—no knowledge."

"But I have to ask you this question. Don't take offense at it. But were you part of a hoax in which Roger Patterson, yourself included and others, may have created this film footage?"

"No," he said with a neutral expression. "OK, you ask the question, was I part of the hoax, the part of the conspiracy, if it was a hoax, is a hoax?"

"Sure."

DeAtley said, "My answer is no. Did I get involved after it was shot, and perpetuate what I believe was a hoax? Yes. Did I try to make monetary gains out of it? Yes, I did. I'm not proud of it, but I did that. You know, I just as soon it wasn't published that way, uh, but. . . . I helped promote something I didn't believe in. But. . . ."

I told him the truth: "Well, in my book that I'm going to write, I'm going to treat everyone based upon the facts that I'm hearing."

"See," he said as he rested his elbows on his knees. He supported his head in his hands and leaned toward me. "I shouldn't have much input in that book because I—my, my desire to make some money on the thing was after the fact, not before the fact. I recognized that there could be some money to be made here. And I'd get even on some of my other bad deals, you know, make some money back."

"Right."

"Am I proud of that?" he said. "No. But, would I do it again? Hell, no, I wouldn't. Not at my age. You do some silly things when you're back in your early thirties. I was in Roger's mind a source of money. We were not buddies. He didn't understand me at all, why I'd go to work, live my life like I did, you know. And I didn't understand him and his life. So we had nothing in common. Only he was a—he was a, uh, he got enthusiastic about projects, and he could talk me into making small investments."

"And when the footage came along it was—"

"I thought that might be . . . a good one. That might be one that would get me home . . . and it did! So it wasn't all bad, so. . . . My point is, I don't think I—I—I . . . don't, don't, don't . . . don't misconceive the fact that I was close to Roger in any way, shape, or form. I wasn't. Even when I took the film on the road, you know, I mean, he wasn't out there helping me work it. He wasn't out there buying advertising, booking theaters, and twenty hours a day organizing things in the dead of winter in the Midwest with snow up your ass." He frowned.

I asked him if he knew Pat Mason, who had edited the twenty-minute short film.

"Well, Roger was a little infectious, you know. When he got on a subject, it's kind of like a dog on your pant leg. He didn't know how to turn loose once he took a bite. He'd hang on 'til. . . . Then he'd work on my wife, and then he'd be back on my back."

This was the Roger Patterson I had come to know, I reflected.

"Roger was a great storyteller," DeAtley continued. "He was an artistic man. He could keep people's attention for a long time. We have some pictures of horses that he drew. They are just absolutely fantastic. I mean, every muscle ripples at the right place, everything is absolutely correct."

I thought of Dahinden's passionate description of the Bluff Creek Bigfoot's muscles supposedly "rippling" in Patterson's film.

"Yeah, he had a lot of talents," said DeAtley, "but a businessman was not one of 'em. He just didn't like the grind of day in day out. You know, like when we had the goats. Like, 'Goddamn, Roger, you don't call 'em up the day before the rodeo and say I want to bring my goats. You call them the day after the rodeo and say I want to bring my goats next year.' Well, bullshit, that wasn't Roger's world." He gave out a throaty laugh. "He was a panhandler. He knew how to get a little here, a little there. My wife got a new car one time, and he talked her out of her old car." He burst into laughter.

I asked, "Do you think Roger could physically manufacture a suit like that himself?"

He nodded. "If—if anybody could. . . . Uh, the definition of that face, you know. When you look at that face and study it, which I have obviously, uh . . ." He paused for eight seconds, his brow furrowed. "I have to answer your question affirmative. I think he . . . he, uh, he seemed to have the ability all through life to, uh, accomplish what he set out to accomplish, whether it being a good rodeo rider, which he was. A little guy on those great big bulls, you know. Team sports he didn't like. Because again they were too organized. He was also better at track, you know, individual sports, was always better. His tumbling. He was good. So, to answer your question, knowing Roger and the research he would and could do, he would, uh . . . and then have the time. I can still remember when he'd come over to our house, and I'd get my phone bill at the end of the month, and I'd get about half-angry with my wife. He'd called all over the world, if not all over the United States. 'Roger over here last month?' [DeAtley would ask his wife]." He laughed. "One day in it [the phone bill] was forty long-distance phone calls. Well, he didn't have a phone."

"Which made it convenient for him actually," I commented.

"Well, then he sold manure. Who took the orders for the manure? My wife. 'Cause Iva couldn't turn him down. At the same time I honestly believed if he did fake it, he would have told her. She says he didn't. He never told her. My wife believes it. She doesn't think he'd do that. I'm skeptical of everything. I'm just a skeptical person. My wife's just the opposite. My kids when they were younger started telling her a raft of bullshit that didn't hold any water. I said, 'Now wait a minute, dear, this story isn't holding good water. There's something missing here.'"

He paused. "I have no idea, Greg, I—I. . . . Don't let my interview taint this thing, because I was a bit player in his life, a totally bit player. I didn't spend much time with him. Even at the end, when he lived in our home, that last seven or eight months, he was usually asleep when I came in, and he was always asleep when I left. He was a very sick man. And I'm the type of guy I don't sit around the house on weekends. I work on Saturday, and I'm out in my yard all day

Sunday. So, I'm just not the guy that can sit around. I get nervous. He was—he was a good boy. You wonder why God takes some people when they do. A very young man.

"I've probably been too blunt honest with you," he continued, "but if I agree to be interviewed, I have to be honest. I can't. . . . There's a legacy. . . . Uh, if it's in fact a creature, he made a hell of a mark in this world, his thirty-six years here [*sic*: thirty-eight]. He proved something. If it isn't, you've got him. That would tell he pulled a pretty good hoax. He was an artist . . . that—that's—that's what he was, that's what he loved, that's what his life was all about, and he was, he was gonna hit. . . ."

"Hit the big time?" I finished for him.

"He was gonna make it the easy way, not like us stupid bastards working eighty hours a week." He chuckled.

"Well, you're definitely a contrast to him," I said. "I mean, you made it 'the hard way.'"

"Yeah, I couldn't be any more the opposite of him. I went to college. I was a business major. Here's a blue print. Just do it long enough, lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, everything's gonna work out fine for you. Just stay there and plug away. Young people say, 'How do you get a big business?' I say, 'Pretty damn simple.You start out and you work an eighty-hour week. Live off what you make on the first forty. Invest the second forty, expanding your business. Abandon your children. Ignore them all through high school. And twenty-five years later you're probably gonna be half-assed wealthy.'" A dark expression filled his face. "But not for the right things. Because you give up too much. My son said, 'Bullshit, Dad, I don't want to run the business. I want to raise my boys. I want to raise my sons, and when they leave home I'll make my money. Hell with it that I've got to raise my kids like you raised us.'" He hung his head. Sadness flooded his face. He knew he had lost something forever. "I took my children to the office on Saturday with me." He half looked up at me. "I always did that. I always piled them in the pickup truck and headed off to the office. They'd play in the piles, dink around, or whatever, run the equipment, I'd do my job. I was not a good father. Anyway. . . . OK." He closed the atlas and said, "Glad to have met you."

I thanked him for his time.

"Ah, fine," he said, and looked away. "I guess I look at it as helping Roger. But you know. . . . The point is I just wasn't close to Roger. I just was not close at all. I was strictly a money source."

I shut off the recorder and scooped it up with the pad of paper and placed them all in my briefcase. We took the elevator down to the lobby. The elevator opened onto the lobby. DeAtley gave me a harsh look and he said good-bye.

Wow, I did it, I thought excitedly as I strode toward the car, my back aching from sitting in a chair for three-and-a-half hours. I had interviewed the mysterious Al DeAtley. The Al DeAtley who was always lingering in the background of the Roger Patterson story. He had never flagged during the long interview. Clearly, he wanted me to hear his side of the story.

As I drove out of Yakima on Highway 395 through the russet brown hills, I played over and over the interview in my mind. DeAtley had emphasized several times that he was never a friend of Patterson, only a money source. "I was a bit player in his life," DeAtley had said, "a totally bit player." And he had repeated many times over that he had promoted the Bigfoot film only to make money. He said that he wasn't part of a hoax, although he suspected from the get-go the footage was fake. DeAtley offered up that when you're young, you do things you later come to regret. Today, DeAtley had regrets, he admitted.

As I merged onto Interstate 90, heading west, I struggled with some of the points that DeAtley had repeatedly driven home. If DeAtley was never a friend of Patterson, only a relative and a money source, why did he continually provide money to Patterson when he knew he'd probably never get it back? For a conservative businessman intent on building Superior Asphalt, DeAtley's actions seemed extraordinarily un-businesslike. DeAtley had been loaning or giving money to Patterson since the early 1960s. Even as the projects failed—due to Patterson's lack of discipline—DeAtley continued to tolerate his brother-in-law's behavior. He wasn't adverse to giving Patterson money, over and over. I remembered several of the dollar figures DeAtley cited. He had given Patterson a couple of thousand dollars for the goats project, untold money for the stagecoach project, up to six hundred dollars for printing Patterson's book, $3,600 to edit the film *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman*, and twenty bucks "here and there" during Patterson's hunt for Bigfoot. Then there was the money for clothes for Patterson; air fare, hotel, and living expenses in Los Angeles; attorney fees for the Bigfoot Enterprises business contract; money to pay fifteen girls to answer Northwest Research's mail; money to print and mail a newsletter; money for television advertising, travel, hotel, living expenses, and projector rentals during the film promotions; and several thousand dollars to pay for a futile cancer cure. And this was only the money DeAtley had remembered he had invested in Patterson. How many tens of thousands of dollars did this amount to, in the end? Patterson also used DeAtley's telephone, racking up exorbitant costs for long-distance calls. If Patterson wasn't a friend, why did DeAtley fashion a stool to ease Patterson's pain, smuggling it into the hospital? DeAtley claimed that he helped Patterson because his wife Iva loved her little brother. During all these business affairs with Patterson over the years, DeAtley must have had many conversations with his brother-in-law, not only regarding their business dealings, but while on the road, for example, during their trip to California to sell the angora goats, during the planning and development of Northwest Research, during their trips to such places as Seattle to edit the Bluff Creek footage into the movie *Bigfoot*, or during their trip to Salt Lake City. Was it true that DeAtley, as he said near the end of the interview, had became involved in the Bigfoot film only because he needed the money to help his company through a period of hard times?

I tore around a slow-moving truck and started the curving ascent up into the Cascades. I reached over and yanked a soda from my ice chest, held it between my legs, and popped it open with a free hand as I steered. And then there was the matter of DeAtley's memory. I took a long drink from the can. DeAtley's memory always seemed to fail at the junctures I considered most critical to prove or disprove the footage a hoax. For example, DeAtley drew a total blank regarding the processing of the footage. His "memory banks" were "flooded." And he remembered absolutely *nothing* regarding when he received the film or where he took it to be developed. He remembered none of Patterson's words or his own when Patterson called from Willow Creek on October 20, 1967; wasn't exactly certain where he rented the projector; didn't remember if Patterson came with Gimlin or by himself to DeAtley's house to view the footage; couldn't remember the name of the newspaper man who viewed the footage in his basement even though he had known him a long time; and didn't remember if he viewed the footage with only Patterson or alone. But he did remember thinking, immediately upon viewing the footage, that the film must be a hoax. Yes, *that* he did remember. And did remember, in rich detail, how he went promoting the footage in Los Angeles, New York, and Atlanta, even down to such details as buying Patterson and Gimlin sports jackets, slacks, and boots, and the exact amount of money he made on the road showing Bigfoot in theaters. But when it came to the initial stages of his involvement with the footage—he simply remembered *nothing*. I found this loss of memory puzzling, especially since DeAtley appeared to be a sharp businessman with an excellent memory regarding money.

I was approaching the tunnel on I-90 that marks the driver's imminent approach to the Snoqualmie Ski Resort. I drained the last of the soda. What was more odd, I brooded, was DeAtley's clear, distinct description of Patterson as a freeloader, panhandler, peddler, and schemer who he knew would rarely pay back anyone a loan. I tried to remember DeAtley's precise words. Something about Patterson "scheming." "His mind worked in a scheming way. . . ." If DeAtley knew this was a primary trait of his brother-in-law—having seen it with his own eyes, and having freely engaged himself as a business partner with Patterson—why did DeAtley associate with Patterson at all? Was it a case of an obnoxious brother-in-law that DeAtley paid off to get rid of the pest? Or was it something more?

I slowed as I sighted glinting ice on the highway. Yes, what exactly was DeAtley's motive? I remembered DeAtley's mood changing dramatically in the interview when he remembered the trash can filled with money in the hotel room on the night of the premiere of *Bigfoot*. I couldn't help but conclude that DeAtley invested in Patterson's projects over nearly a decade because DeAtley was convinced that Patterson would eventually hit pay dirt; then DeAtley would profit from Patterson's dreams, not just recoup a return on his lost investments. Strange. DeAtley never seemed to care that he was supporting an undisciplined and impoverished business partner who he knew lived off other people, stole, and stuck them with the bill. "He was gonna pay them sometime," DeAtley had said. "He wasn't dishonest about it." Regarding the charge against Patterson of grand larceny for stealing the camera, DeAtley's response was indifference. "He didn't break in the window and steal it and run out the door, right?" Could it be, I thought, that DeAtley, in some inexplicable way, actually admired the little cowboy and found Patterson's business ethic entirely acceptable?

Racing past the ski resort, I planned my next step. Cautious and meticulous research had to be the order of the day. Thirty-two years had passed since the events of October 20 to 22, 1967. No human being is perfect, and conceivably DeAtley really was experiencing total memory breakdown when it came to the facts of when, where, and how he received the footage and processed it. For years Byrne had been investigating this chain-of-custody issue. Apparently Byrne had pinpointed a Seattle film company as one of the links in the chain. I would have to follow up. But, first things first.

I drove into the familiar parking spot at the apartment. After unloading the car, I telephoned Pat. "It was a good interview," I said, and I gave her the main points. "I'm going to track down every photo lab in the Northwest and see if they remember processing the footage. I love you. I'll be glad when you get home."

I spent the weekend resting up. I was overjoyed when I picked up Pat at the Seattle train station. The next night I sat down at my desk, found the manila folder marked "Film Specifications," and began the next step in the Patterson investigation.

NOTES

1. John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Vancouver: Hancock House, Ltd., 1978), p. 118.
2. Ibid., p. 119.
3. John Napier, *Bigfoot* (New York: Berkley Medallion Book, 1974), p. 107.

17

THE PHOTO LAB FILM PROCESSORS

> *I'd say those guys were up to something if they said they shot it on Friday and sent it to Yakima, and they were viewing it on Sunday.*
>
> **—Richard Vedvick, professional film processor**

According to the information in my "Film Specifications" file, Patterson had photographed his Bigfoot on the very tail end of a one-hundred-foot roll of Kodachrome II color film, ASA film speed 64, K-12 process. Supposedly, the camera was a sixteen-millimeter, hand-held Cine Kodak. As the court records showed, Patterson was arrested for stealing the camera; but did anyone really know if he used it at Bluff Creek? The Bigfooters believed he did, but where was the proof? Also in my file was an e-mail that a colorful Bigfooter named Erik Beckjord had posted on a Bigfoot list. Beckjord stated that a Clive Tobin of AlphaCine Film Labs, Seattle, Washington, had processed Patterson's original Bluff Creek film roll. Potentially, this was a fruitful lead because neither Dahinden, Green, nor Byrne knew who processed the film.

Sitting down at my computer with a cup of hot, green tea and a freshly baked brownie, I fired up my Internet connection and found Beckjord's site. Beckjord claimed that Patterson had shot, in addition to the Bigfoot striding across the dry creek bed, *an entire group of Bigfoot creatures*![1] Patterson and Gimlin had failed to see them because they were concentrating, instead, on the single Bigfoot in front of them. All one had to do was blow up the film frames to reveal the hidden Bigfoots standing among the trees and the bushes in the background, all watching Patterson and Gimlin. Curiously, Beckjord's site also featured several photos he had shot at O. J. Simpson's Rockingham estate in Los Angeles six months after Simpson had allegedly murdered his wife Nicole Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman. Beckjord had taken the photos in pouring rain, and he claimed that if you looked hard enough you could see the "spirit" faces of the murder victims. Staring at the magnified color photos, all I could see were out-of-focus leaves and branches. "Paranormal images are never sharp and clear as a photo of your dog," said Beckjord on his Web site. "The object itself is usually fuzzy and half clear."[2]

Needless to say, I decided against contacting Beckjord and concentrated instead on connecting with Clive Tobin. I soon had him on the phone. He had a calm, methodical voice typical of technical people who control intricate machines and deal with fine details on a daily basis. He worked at AlphaCine Labs from 1963 until 1984. While there, he operated the film-developing machines and color timers. His duties were to look at customers' films undergoing processing and decide on their exposure and color corrections. He now worked for an electronics manufacturer who made crystal motors for movie cameras.

Yes, he knew a little about the Patterson film, and yes, he added in a wry, nasal voice, he remembered Beckjord. In the mid-1970s, blonde-headed Beckjord came to the lab quite frequently to have photographs blown up. Tobin remembered Beckjord often chatting with technicians in the optical effects department in the back of the shop. Beckjord had a theory, Tobin recalled, that unknown primates were hiding in trees, and a person could photograph the trees and detect the primates in the photo blowups.

"Well, Beckjord says that you processed the original Patterson film," I said. "I also have a story from *Argosy* magazine that says Patterson and his sidekick Bob Gimlin had the original film processed under armed guard."

After thinking for a moment, Tobin said, "I remember making film prints or dupes of the original. But I couldn't have processed the original film because I was in the Army from 1966 to 1969."

If true, that statement blew Beckjord's story.

Even if he had processed the original film, Tobin added, it wouldn't have been under armed guard. Armed guards were allowed in the lab only if a secret military project was involved. Even then, Tobin wouldn't want anyone with him. "During half of the processing, the machine was in total darkness," he said. "You can't have people tripping over each other." He never met Patterson anyway, as far as he remembered.

"Who brought in the original film for copying?" I asked.

He only remembered that "It was definitely original Kodachrome film. We were probably copying it onto Ektachrome print film."

"Why Ektachrome?"

Well, because AlphaCine Labs handled mostly Ektachrome commercial film. "We were a professional lab serving people who were shooting professional film and who wanted good copies. Kodachrome doesn't copy well. Anyone who knew anything wouldn't have used Kodachrome to shoot movies."

Therefore, whenever AlphaCine Labs received Kodachrome from a customer, they shipped it to Kodak's Palo Alto Lab in California. "Kodachrome was an elaborate process set up in major metropolitan centers," Tobin said. "It was very expensive. The Kodachrome machines had to be run eight hours everyday or else the chemicals would go bad." Therefore, volume was important for a lab to profit from handling Kodachrome film. Kodak had that volume. In the mid-1960s and 1970s, Kodak had a number of large processing labs scattered around the country in populated centers to serve millions of customers.

Tobin described in technical detail the steps in copying a roll of sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome film onto Ektachrome film. "Everything is programmed into the printer. Run it through the ultrasonic cleaner to clean off any dust or fingerprints, contact-print the emulsion onto the emulsion side of the print film to make the copy. The original and the print film are held in register on a printing sprocket, then put the print film into a developer to come up with a copy of the first."

"Interesting," I said. "How would a person know he had Patterson's original Kodachrome film? None of the Bigfooters had ever seen the original roll."

"Well, the edge printing on the film would tell you."

"Edge printing?" I asked.

"Yeah. On the edge of the film, outside the frames, were symbols. They were like a secret code. I can't remember exactly what they were, maybe a circle, a triangle, a plus sign, something like that. They would tell you the year the film was actually manufactured. You know, the person you should talk to is Leslie E. Davis. He was co-owner and president of AlphaCine Labs back then. He had direct involvement with the lab operations and processed film himself. I think he lives near Wauna, Washington. And you might also call Rich Vedvick at Forde Labs. Spelled F-O-R-D-E. Those were the big labs in Seattle during the time you're talking about."

In minutes, I had Leslie E. Davis on the phone. He told me he was retired. He had founded AlphaCine about 1959 and had sold it in 1994. He had the conservative, comforting voice of a man who had worked a well-established routine for most of his adult life. I sensed he was quite at home with the mechanical, repetitive activities of a photo lab, which under his direction had eighty employees. "I remember the film," he said. "It was in color. It was shot in Kodachrome."

"You definitely remember seeing the original film?"

"What we got in the lab was *copies* of the film. We made copies for whoever it was who was trying to prove Bigfoot."

It sounded like Patterson or someone had returned to AlphaCine with copies of the original to make *copies from the copies*. I slumped down in my chair, suddenly pessimistic that I would never find Patterson's original Bigfoot film—none of the old-time Bigfooters had found it—or uncover who had processed the original.

Nonetheless, I went on questioning Davis for an hour. He remembered seeing the film probably three different times when it was brought to the lab for copying. Each time he made one or two copies. Part of the processing involved putting the film on a projector and viewing it. "I remember it. It was a few feet of a Bigfoot walking through the grass. I think someone from Yakima brought it in. They claimed they owned the film."

"You definitely remember putting it on a projector?"

"Yes. I don't know who took the order. But I remember it coming through. It wasn't a big thing. We've been involved in an awful lot of big things, like making copies of the Kennedy assassination film and the film of Marilyn Monroe's funeral. The Bigfoot film wasn't a real big thing. We looked at tons of film over the years. We had a lot of amputation film from the University of Washington. But I wouldn't watch those things."

Yuck. Bleeding stumps. I looked sullenly at the green, sodden tea bag at the bottom of my cup. "What would you do if a customer brought in an original roll of Kodachrome sixteen-millimeter film?"

"Send it to Palo Alto. It was the closest regional lab. It's shut down now."

"Let me give you a scenario," I said. "Patterson supposedly shot the film early on the afternoon of October 20, 1967, a Friday. He said he shipped it on a plane to Yakima, maybe late afternoon or in the evening of the twentieth. For the sake of argument, let's assume it arrived in Yakima late that night, on the twentieth. Someone would have had to pick it up at the Yakima airport. Saturday, the twenty-first, comes and goes. Then on Sunday, October 22, the film is on a projector and being shown in Patterson's brother-in-law's house in Yakima. Therefore, the film had to have been processed on Saturday, the twenty-first."

"Can't do it," Davis said sharply. "No way. Kodak didn't work on weekends."

"Not on weekends?"

"No. We dealt with Palo Alto for years and years and years. The technology didn't exist in the Northwest. But there was also a Kodak lab in Los Angeles, and in Hollywood. Sometimes we shipped film down there."

"Well," I said, thinking of alternatives, "could you arrange ahead of time to have a Kodachrome roll processed by Kodak in Palo Alto on a Saturday?"

"No," he said resolutely. "No. They wouldn't do it. No. They didn't work overtime or open the lab on weekends." He couldn't remember a single time Kodak labs in California opened on a weekend. "When Kodak came out with Ektachrome film, we could start making dupes," he said. "It's a bad film, but our lab could do the Ektachrome film process. We did it for Boeing. No, if it was Kodachrome, it had to be done by Kodak. You know, there was one other lab in Palo Alto, too, now that I remember. It was a lab called Cinechrome. But it went belly up. I'm sure we didn't ship the Bigfoot film down there to that lab. We didn't like their chemical process. The owner of that lab was an ex-Kodak chemist named Burton Holmes."

I wrote down "Holmes" on my pad of paper.

I remembered DeAtley telling me that Byrne had speculated that DeAtley could have taken the film to a photo lab at Boeing. "What about Boeing? Did Boeing have a lab capable of processing Kodachrome?"

"No. Boeing sent their Kodachrome film to us, and we sent it down to Palo Alto."

I kept at him. "You said Kodak wouldn't have ever worked on a weekend. But let's assume for the moment someone convinced them to open up and process Patterson's film. Take me through the steps. How long would it have taken to process the film, and how much would it have cost?"

"Well, let's see. With a fifty- to one-hundred-foot roll of Kodachrome film. . . ." He deliberated for a moment. "About four to eight hours. See, if it was a Saturday, you'd have to bring a chemist and staff in—that would be about two to three processors and a mechanic. You'd have to call them, and then they'd have to get into the lab. Once they're in the lab, they'd have to deal with a complicated chemical process, which is Kodachrome processing. The chemist would have to first warm the machine up, and that takes time. He'd have to get everything up to temperature. Then, he'd have to check things out, you know, make sure the chemistry is right. Then he'd have to do a test run. Once everything was ready, the actual processing of the film would take an hour to an hour and a half. Then, the processors would have to clean up the machine afterwards."

"And the cost?"

"At least two thousand dollars."

"Wow! A fortune."

"Yeah."

"I guess if someone could pay Kodak enough money they might do it," I suggested, and I pictured DeAtley laying a stack of cash on a countertop.

"Kodak didn't do *anything* for *anybody* on a weekend," Davis said. "We've known that for years. Kodak was a Monday through Friday operation. Now, sometimes we'd open *our* lab on weekends, but usually if it was something monumental. For example, the JFK assassination and Marilyn Monroe's death. We opened and made copies of those films for the news media, two hundred copies at a time. They were all black-and-white in those days. We shipped them all over the world. There were only two labs in the country who would do that. The other one was in Boston. We were *the* major lab in Seattle. We handled thirty-five-millimeter, sixteen-millimeter, and seventy-millimeter film, the quality shown in theaters, and we served Boeing and we did sixteen-millimeter educational films from Los Angeles."

"I wonder if there was a lab somewhere *outside* the Seattle area, but in the Northwest, that could process Kodachrome film?"

"Well. . . ." Davis searched his memory for several moments. "There was Teknifilm in Portland, Oregon. The lab director was Robert Zurcher. But Teknifilm couldn't have processed the original. I know, because you see, we built all their processing machines. They had Ektachrome and did color positives and negatives. There was also Forde Labs. Forde Labs was in Portland and Seattle in 1967. The Portland lab is shut down now. But, see, Forde Labs wouldn't do any Kodachrome either. You might want to talk to Rich Vedvick of Forde Labs. He's the current owner. He bought the lab from Ed Watton. You know," he said, chuckling, "I remember when I was at a ranch in Montana at an elevation of 6,500 feet. I was three miles from the ranch when my snowmobile conked out. It was getting dark, and I saw a large footprint in the snow. I was scared stiff. I had just read a book on Bigfoot. The next day I figured the track was from a moose!" We shared a laugh.

"Thanks for your time, Mr. Davis." I signed off.

I dragged myself to bed and went to work the next morning. That evening, after battling my way home through the usual stop-and-go freeway traffic, I was back in my chair in the study, the phone receiver cradled between my ear and shoulder, a pen in my hand. I punched in Richard Vedvick's number, the owner of Forde Labs in Seattle. Pat was at her computer. "I'm going to solve this damn puzzle if it kills me," I told her as I listened to Vedvick's home phone ring in my ear.

A stentorian, male voice answered the phone. "Hello. Vedvick." He sounded stressed and tired, as if he had come home from a long day.

"Leslie Davis suggested I call you," I said, and I explained my book project and my goal of solving the mystery of where Patterson's film had been processed. I also summarized for him Les Davis's memories of the Patterson film.

He said immediately in a baritone voice, "I remembered the guys came in, and I made a couple of prints."

I pinned the receiver close to my ear and started scribbling. "Two guys?"

"Yep. One was a little short guy, and . . . I can't remember the other guy. I don't remember their names."

Patterson, I thought. And maybe Gimlin. "So you remember two guys coming in with the famous Bigfoot film?"

"Oh, sure. It was *distinctive* film."

"Do you remember *when* the two men came in your lab?" I asked.

"Well. . . ." There was silence for several seconds. "I remember they were concerned about security. They wanted to be near the film. They wanted to be in its presence all the time."

"Did they follow you around in the lab?"

"I'm not sure. I do know I had time to look at the film on the bench."

"Did it look to you like an original piece of film, already processed?"

"Yes. It definitely was original film," he said.

"And it was Kodachrome?"

"Yes. It was Kodachrome. And I would agree with Les, that it was processed in Palo Alto. There was nobody up here doing Kodachrome, sixteen-millimeter, or Super 8 at the time."

I repeated the scenario I had given Davis: the shipment of Patterson's film on a Friday afternoon or evening to Yakima, its processing the next day, Saturday, and its premiere showing in DeAtley's house on Sunday, all within forty-eight hours.

Vedvick contemplated the scenario. "I'd say those guys were up to something if they said they shot it on Friday and sent it to Yakima, and they were viewing it on Sunday. I'd say that was extremely unlikely. You could 'buy' the lab and get the film processed, I suppose, if you laid enough money on the table, but as a regular course of business? No."

While I prepared to ask my next question, I considered the implications of Vedvick's statement. Of course, DeAtley, a wealthy businessman, would've had the money to "buy" a lab on a Saturday. But "buy" the *Kodak Palo Alto lab*, run with strict procedures by a major corporation? It seemed unlikely. Once DeAtley received Patterson's excited phone call on that Friday, probably late in the afternoon of the twentieth (a reasonable assumption considering the time it took Patterson and Gimlin to wrap up their business at the film site and get to a pay phone), DeAtley would have had to immediately persuade Kodak, before closing time on the twentieth, to open its lab on Saturday. Then, he would've had to pick up the film at the Yakima airport that Friday night or Saturday morning, fly it down to Palo Alto, wait hours on Saturday the twenty-first for it to be developed, fly back to Yakima with the processed film, and then drive home from the airport. Surely, DeAtley would have remembered that sequence. But, as he told me, he remembered nothing.

I worked with Vedvick to try to pinpoint when he made copies of the original film for the "little short guy" and his companion.

"If I remember, it seems to me they said they were going to go talk to the *Seattle Times* about the whole thing and that they'd be back. Our lab was kitty-corner to the *Times*. I remember seeing the story later."

Bingo! I remember seeing a *Seattle Times* news article published either on Wednesday, October 25, or Thursday, October 26, 1967. That would have put Patterson and Gimlin at Forde Labs on the twenty-fourth or the twenty-fifth, two to three days after the film was viewed in DeAtley's house.

"I think the prints ended up at the University of British Columbia," Vedvick said. "Some anthropology hot shots up there looked at it."

As Vedvick waited for my next question, I constructed a sequence of events in my head. Patterson and Gimlin must have driven to Seattle within two days of the showing of the film at DeAtley's, had prints made at Forde Labs, and then headed up north to Canada to join Green and the scientists. DeAtley, I knew, had also gone up to Canada.

"Let me ask you this," I said, laconically drawing a lopsided circle on my pad of paper. "Kodachrome film had to be shipped down to Palo Alto for processing. How do you know the film they brought you was the *Kodachrome original*?"

"Because Kodachrome has a distinctive matte finish to the emulsion side," he answered with authority, "and the film I copied had that matte finish. Also, Kodak had a white leader with red letters on the film saying 'Processed by Kodak.' I don't remember the typical yellow box that the film was stored in, but it was probably with the film."

"So you do remember reading markings on the film?"

"Yes, that's my recollection. It had a Kodak leader."

"May I quote you for my book?" I asked, and I filled in the circle with my pen.

"I've talked a number of times over the years to these Bigfoot guys," he said with hesitation, "and they've quoted me and made my comments a little more colorful than what I said. I didn't appreciate it too much."

I promised him that I'd quote him accurately.

After I hung up, I found Ed Watton's phone number. He owned Forde Labs in 1967 and was Vedvick's former boss. After several tries to reach him, we connected. I informed him that Davis and Vedvick had given me their memories of the Patterson film.

"What did Davis and Vedvick tell you?" Watton asked in the aged tenor of a man who had worked long and hard and was now settled into the comforting groove of retirement.

I boiled their stories down for Watton—that two men had visited Forde labs with a film of a walking Bigfoot and asked for prints to be made of it, that the film was Kodachrome film, and that only original Kodachrome film could be processed in Palo Alto.

"I would agree with them," he said without hesitation, his voice warm and resonant.

"Do you remember looking at the original footage?"

"We looked at it, as I recall. In fact, it seems to me we screened it for those gentlemen who had it. Now that you're jogging my memory, it was always a mystery where that thing was processed. Because it didn't seem to track with the usual events, or timeframe, or any of the other identification that went with the normal Kodachrome, yet it was marked—it had all the markings of an original Kodachrome film."

"What would those markings be?"

"Well, there is a latent image that Eastman Kodak puts on the side of the film when they are spooling it at the coating factory. It identifies the type of film, the various identifications of the emulsion number, and where in the master roll it was cut, and all sorts of things Eastman puts on it so they can go back and check any piece of film right back to the coating galleries in Rochester, New York, where they put the chemistry on the base and make the film."

Watton knows his stuff, I thought. "I don't quite understand one thing. What's a latent image?"

"Well, when Kodak prepares film at the coating plant," he said patiently, "they expose the edge of the film with identification marks. It sits in the emulsion. You can't see it until the film is processed. The Patterson film could have been processed by an Eastman Kodak processing lab."

"Did you see the words on the original, 'Processed by Kodak'?" I asked.

He said he couldn't remember seeing such words on the film, or letters such as "P" or "PA," which would stand for Palo Alto. But he did remember seeing latent-image symbols or markings typical of Kodachrome film. "It looked like regular Kodachrome film," he said.

I asked him if a photo lab with Kodachrome film processing would open its doors on a Saturday to process a single, one-hundred-foot roll of Kodachrome film.

He let out a dry laugh. "It is possible, but it's as likely General Motors would start up a production line to turn out one car on the weekend because someone wants it. Or a dry cleaner would turn on his machines and bring them up to temperature to process somebody's pants on the weekend."

I found myself laughing.

We chatted a few more minutes, then I thanked him and hung up. I had a headache. "Pat," I said, wheeling around in my chair. She wheeled around, too, and faced me.

"This is completely idiotic!" I said angrily. "Here I am, thirty-two years after Patterson shot his film, and I'm trying to find out where and when the original film was processed. Why didn't Dahinden, Green, and Byrne try to find out its genesis the first time they saw it. *Why?*"

"Because they didn't want to know?" she said, winking.

I massaged my eyes with my knuckles. "Time to go to bed, I think."

A few days later, I reviewed my notes. Davis had mentioned Robert Zurcher of Teknifilm in Portland, Oregon. In 1967 Zurcher was working for Teknifilm. I found his number and called.

Zurcher quickly said that Teknifilm never processed Kodachrome film.

"Was there anybody in the Portland area who could process Kodachrome film in 1967?" I asked.

"There was Sawyer's Vu-Master. They had a Kodachrome processing lab, but they didn't handle sixteen-millimeter film. They handled thirty-five-millimeter still film."

Why would DeAtley even travel to Portland anyway, I thought, when Seattle was closer?

For forty-five minutes, I asked Zurcher the same questions I had asked Tobin, Davis, Vedvick, and Watton. He agreed with them on all points.

"It turns out," I said, "that Patterson's brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, doesn't remember where he took the film for processing. He told me his 'memory banks are flooded.'"

"Hmm. Being that's such a large adventure," Zurcher commented, "I think that would be hard to lose in your memory banks somewhere."

Once again, I imagined the "large adventure" and all its steps, from Patterson's first excited phone call to DeAtley to DeAtley's renting the projector and eagerly viewing the film before Patterson arrived home. Surely DeAtley would have remembered a great deal about such highly charged events.

Zurcher elucidated all the Kodachrome film processing steps described earlier by the other film lab operators, and he added new information. As I hastily took notes, I felt my head throbbing. . . . It takes two to three hours to get the machine up to temperature, he explained, then two hours minimum actual lab time, so that's a minimum of four hours. . . . Negative film with dye couplers; negative chemically reversed to positive image; red, green, yellow, separate dye baths; final wash; then dry.

"See," he finished, "the Kodachrome process involved building up large rolls of customers' films, up to two thousand feet, onto one roll, setting them up for processing, and then running them through the processing machine. Then you'd take the two thousand feet to the breakdown bench and put each customer's film onto a spool and into its original film envelope. You'd process huge bunches of film all together. It's just not cost-effective to do them one at a time."

"So, how much would it cost to do one roll of Kodachrome film?" I asked.

"Oh, at Teknifilm, it would cost a couple of thousand dollars to open a lab," he answered matter of factly, "even for a hundred feet of film."

"Could someone in Yakima do this kind of process, using chemicals they bought, like do it in their basement?" I asked.

"No. It was a proprietary process."

We exchanged a few more words, and I hung up. God, my head was hurting.

A few days passed, and I found myself thumbing through my notes from the recent photo lab interviews. As I scanned Davis's interview, I stumbled upon the name of the owner of Cinechrome Lab in Palo Alto. However, not realizing it, I had misheard Davis and had written down "Burton *Stone*," instead of Burton *Holmes*, who Davis had named. I discovered my error when, after using a search engine on online, I reached by phone a "Burton Stone" in Beverly Hills.

A woman answered the phone and called who I thought was Burton Holmes to the phone.

"This is Burton Stone!" a man bellowed into the phone.

"Stone? I'm looking for Burton *Holmes*."

"I'm *Burton Stone*. Burton Holmes owned Cinechrome in San Francisco. I used to work for Fox for Deluxe Laboratories. I was president. You've heard of Deluxe Labs? They've dealt with all the Hollywood filmmakers since 1915."

"Well. . . ."

"I work part time now."

"Well, I'm a writer." I explained the book project and the riddle of when and where Patterson's famous Kodachrome footage was processed.

"I know that film," he barked. "It looks like a 1960s hippie in the woods. If it was shot in color and reversal film—which Kodachrome film is—it was probably done at a Kodak lab."

I could hear women chattering in the background and the sound of high-heel shoes echoing off a hard surface. Stone had walked to the foyer of his house to say goodbye to them. I pictured him standing on smooth, cold marble in front of a towering, oak door.

"Yes, dear," he said, the phone muffled. I heard a loud, wet kiss and a door opening. "Take care." The door slammed shut, and Stone's voice reverberated in the receiver. "I was president of the Association of Cinema and Video Laboratories. I have a sheet in my office of all the labs that are left in the country. Call me tomorrow and I'll fax it to you."

"That's fantastic!"

"Look, someone else who you should call is Joerg Agin. That's pronounced 'yorg.' He's in charge of the motion picture division of Eastman Kodak in L.A. Or try him in Rochester, New York."

"Thanks, I—"

"Call me tomorrow!" he ordered. "Goodnight."

I found Pat sitting in her recliner in the living room. She was dreamily staring at colorful images dancing on the TV screen.

"This thing is getting complicated," I sighed deeply. I sat down on the sofa and put my head in my hands. "DeAtley's memory banks are flooded. And I'm fed up."

However, the next day, after a good night's sleep, I called Burton Stone, and he faxed me a ten-page listing of the members of the Association of Cinema and Video Laboratories. That evening I leafed through the pages. What should I do? I wondered. Call all the labs in the western United States? There were half a dozen labs in the Los Angeles, Hollywood, and San Francisco areas. I pictured the phone bill rising and months passing as I sought to find someone who might still work in the labs and who just might have remembered handling Patterson's film. And what if Patterson had used a lab that's no longer in business?

I found Joerg Agin's home number through Kodak's corporate headquarters and after several attempts reached the man himself. "I can't fathom who other than a Kodak lab would have done Kodachrome processing in 1967," he said after I explained the problem.

"And it was proprietary, right? No one but Kodak could do it?" I was wondering if somehow there was a lab doing Kodachrome processing other than Kodak in 1967.

"It was proprietary in the nature that a few labs did it and most of them were Kodak laboratories," he said. "Kodak provided more of a service."

Most of the labs were Kodak labs. Maybe somewhere there was a lab, some forgotten lab, maybe in the Northwest, that performed Kodachrome processing. How could Tobin, Davis, Vedvick, and Watton not know about it?

I thanked Agin for his time.

I decided to e-mail Byrne with the problem; in my interview of him months previously he had discussed the enigma of how the film got to Yakima. I wanted to know more. He e-mailed me a file containing an unpublished paper that discussed his Patterson findings. In it, Byrne described his research into the method of transportation of the Patterson film.

I was surprised by the file's content. Byrne believed that Patterson had airshipped the film by charter to Yakima on Saturday, October 21, 1967, and that DeAtley drove the film to the Kodak Technicolor lab at 2301 Third Avenue in Seattle that day. "He waited for [it] to be processed—something that took about three hours—and then drove back to Yakima that night," Byrne wrote.

Now how in the hell did he arrive at *that* conclusion? I wondered nearly aloud. Hadn't Byrne told me when I interviewed him that no charter pilot had a record of flying anything to Yakima because of the weather conditions? And Al DeAtley said that he had absolutely no memory of doing what Byrne purported he'd done.

I quickly got back on the phone and contacted several of the photo lab owners I had interviewed. I asked Clive Tobin, "Do you remember a photo lab in Seattle named Technicolor at 2301 Third Avenue?"

"Ye-e-e-s," it came to him. "I vaguely remember sending home movies to Technicolor. They did have a Kodachrome machine for awhile. I think it was a consumer division of Technicolor."

Damn, I thought as I ground my teeth. How had Tobin overlooked this?

When I called Richard Vedvick, he puzzled for a while over my question. Well, he said, he did now remember something called CX Labs. They did do Kodachrome for awhile. But he couldn't remember much more.

I called Les Davis. After explaining Byrne's finding, Davis also remembered a company called CX Labs. "It was owned by Leonard Tall. You know, the Leonard Tall of Tall's camera shops."

Technicolor, CX Labs, Leonard Tall . . . it was all terribly confusing. Soon, I found Leonard Tall's number. When I asked the woman on the other end of the line for Tall, she said, "He was my husband. He died two years ago."

My heart sank. I explained to her the film puzzle.

"You should call David Hsaio," she said.

"How do you pronounce his last name?"

"Rhymes with 'cow,' and has an S-H sound. He was my husband's business partner for many, many years."

I reached Hsaio. He knew all about Technicolor, for he was an employee of Technicolor in Seattle.

In a soft voice, Hsaio explained that Technicolor, the company in Los Angeles that had invented the famous Technicolor film process, courted Leonard Tall in the mid-1960s to join Technicolor. I vaguely remembered watching movies filmed in rich, vivid Technicolor in the 1950s. Now, Technicolor was out of vogue. In the sixties, Tall owned a successful chain of camera shops throughout Seattle, Tall's Camera Supply. About this time, the U.S. Justice Department ordered Eastman Kodak to allow independent photo labs to use Kodak's proprietary processing formula. Tall and a consortium of camera shop owners formed a company to develop their own Kodacolor processing formula. Tall installed the formula in one of his processing labs in Seattle. He named the lab True Color. The True Color lab processed Kodak film, mainly Kodacolor, Ektachrome, and black-and-white.

The point of my pen jotted quickly across my notepad as I followed Hsaio's story.

After negotiations with Technicolor in 1961 or 1962, Tall sold his camera shops and the True Color lab to Technicolor and joined Technicolor's corporate offices in Burbank. Unfortunately, Tall was unhappy with management and Technicolor moved him and his family back to Seattle where he was assigned to manage the True Color processing lab, now renamed Technicolor, and oversee the camera stores, all of which were now owned by Technicolor. The Seattle Technicolor lab was located in a building at 2301 Third Avenue. Still unhappy working for Technicolor, Tall resigned in 1968, and with Hsaio as a partner, he started a Kodacolor lab named CX Processing. "The CX stands for 'color negative,'" Hsaio explained. "You see, CX 200 was the trade name for Kodacolor film." I felt the familiar throbbing return to my head.

"And you're saying that Technicolor in Seattle was capable of processing Kodachrome film?" I asked.

"Yes."

"When was it capable of doing that?"

"In 1964 or 1965. We hired a man to set up Kodachrome processing. He is Frank Ishihara, a chemist. We brought him up here to purchase and install the Kodachrome equipment."

"Was Technicolor capable of processing sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome II film, the type Patterson used, in 1967?" I asked.

"No. In 1967 the Seattle branch of Technicolor was a consumer processing lab. We processed eight-millimeter and Super 8-millimeter films for the amateur market. We would have to send sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome to Palo Alto."

It looked like Byrne's hypothesis that Technicolor in Seattle processed Kodachrome film was blown to pieces.

I asked Hsaio if he or anyone he knew remembered processing Patterson's film on Saturday, October 21, 1967.

"In October 1967 Technicolor film labs closed on Saturdays unless someone could convince Phil Carnahan, the plant manager. Money talks. If you flash a thousand dollar bill, he'd probably open up."

I described DeAtley's loss of memory. "Could there be records someplace?" I asked.

He chuckled softly. "There's no records kept of the thousands and thousands of rolls of film. I feel that the gentleman you talked to would have remembered."

I thanked Hsaio and walked into the bathroom, opened an aspirin bottle, and washed down three tablets. As Pat and I were pulling back the bed covers, the phone rang. It was Hsaio. He was excited. "I was in error," he said breathlessly. "I just contacted Frank Ishihara. He said that we *had* the capacity to process sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome film in 1967. But he only remembers processing sixteen-millimeter one time on a Saturday. It was for a government client. Ishihara lives in Long Beach, California. Do you want his number?"

I groaned inside. "Sure."

The next day I wearily interrogated Ishihara for an hour.

Ishihara said that Technicolor in Seattle had specifically hired him to install and make operational a Paco 1040 Kodachrome processor in its lab. The machine was capable of processing thirty-five-millimeter and sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome film. Usually, in the summer, when volume was highest, the machine was used twenty-four hours a day, six days a week. Ishihara was the sixteen-millimeter expert, and he only he processed sixteen-millimeter film. But sixteen-millimeter film wasn't a high-volume item. Customers brought in only six rolls of sixteen-millimeter film a month, on average.

"Did you ever process sixteen-millimeter films on Saturdays?" I asked.

"Occasionally we would get a special request for a high-urgency item. This involved firing up the processor for a short run. It was expensive. We would charge the customer four hundred dollars to start up the machine and a little extra for the film. I remember Leonard Tall calling me at home on a Friday evening to ask me to do a special project the next day. The job was for a government customer. The film involved explosives."

"Do you remember processing on a Saturday a one-hundred-foot roll of Kodachrome II film that showed a Bigfoot?" I asked.

"No. If I did, I should have remembered it. When I had special orders for sixteen-millimeter film, I would view them on a projector. Anyway, after all these years, we wouldn't have a record of it."

"Thanks."

I sat back and moaned. Then I remembered. DeAtley had told me during his interview that it was possible he contacted Ralph Richardson of Richardson Aviation to fly down to Northern California to pick up the film, which would have explained how it ended up in Yakima so fast. But, he had said, Richardson was dead. Was his memory wrong?

After a few blind alleys, I made contact with a Ralph Richardson. It turned out he was the *right* Ralph Richardson. Eighty-five-year-old Richardson remembered Al DeAtley. Richardson flew him to Seattle, Portland, and other parts of the Northwest between 1960 and 1965 to buy used machinery for his asphalt business. He remembered that "there was a lot of talk about Bigfoot" in the mid-1960s, but he couldn't have flown down to Northern California to pick up the film.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because I was in Greece at the time." In 1966 and 1967 he was under contract with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to fly an old Navy torpedo bomber to spray olive trees in Greece. He sprayed in 1966 and 1967, from June to fall of each year.

"When exactly did you come back to Yakima in 1967?" I asked.

"In late November," he remembered.

Therefore, he couldn't have picked up Patterson's film. His wife also flew planes for Richardson Aviation, but he had no knowledge of her flying to California to pick up Patterson's film. She died in 1990.

Feeling blue, I put on my sweats and running shoes and left the apartment and wandered down to the neighborhood park. It was pointless, I concluded as I hoofed it along the asphalt path, to continue to look for the lab that processed Patterson's celebrated roll of Kodachrome film. Clearly, in the 1960s if a person in the Northwest took a roll of sixteen-millimeter Kodachrome film to a camera shop or a professional film lab, it was shipped as a matter of course to Palo Alto, California, for processing. In the summer of 1967 Patterson had a sixteen-millimeter camera and was shooting a Bigfoot documentary near the South Fork of the Ahtanum Road. Was I to believe that Patterson would have taken his film rolls of the documentary *all the way to Seattle* for processing, as DeAtley supposedly had with the Bluff Creek footage, when Patterson or a cohort could have used Sheppard's, the local camera shop, who would ship all the rolls for him to Palo Alto?

Well, I speculated, if Patterson did personally hand the film of his South Fork movie to Ishihara at Technicolor, the chances of the film being lost in the mail, or lost or stolen in the processing lab or in route back to Yakima, were diminished. It came down to a question of *convenience*. Was it more *convenient* for Patterson to travel to Seattle? Knowing what I did about Patterson—he was usually broke—it would have been *inconvenient and expensive* for him. It was at least a five-hour round trip from Yakima to Seattle, not to mention the waiting time for the film to be processed, which was a minimum of three hours—and that's only if Patterson could coordinate with Ishihara to start processing the roll the moment he entered the lab. Yes, Patterson conceivably could have had a roll processed in a day in Seattle, but it was certainly a pain in the butt to drive it across the mountains and then drive back. It would have taken a full day, and conceivably cost Patterson a thousand dollars.

Deep in thought, I rounded a bend in the park path and passed the basketball court where several boys were shooting baskets. I sorted through my thoughts. *Bounce . . . bounce.* The ball banged against the backboard and careened past the head of one of the boys; the other boys shoved each other as they lunged after it. As I began my second lap through the park, I wrestled with three possibilities.

First possibility: Assuming that Technicolor in Seattle was the *only lab* in the state capable of processing Kodachrome film, DeAtley must have already known this on October 20, and he would have taken Patterson's roll there on October 21. If he *didn't* already know about Technicolor, then Patterson must have told him on October 20.

Second possibility: DeAtley, after receiving Patterson's excited phone call on October 20, called Sheppard's, or other Yakima camera shops, and upon discovering that none of them could process the roll of film in forty-eight hours, he must have found a Seattle phone book and finally found Technicolor. How long did this process take? I wondered.

Third possibility: After Patterson called DeAtley, DeAtley may have contacted a knowledgeable friend who told him to take the film to Technicolor.

Regardless of the possibilities, *somehow* DeAtley knew, *either on October 20 or earlier*, where to take Patterson's roll. And if DeAtley took the roll to Technicolor, he must have *somehow* managed to reach Tall or Ishihara at Technicolor by phone late on the afternoon of October 20, or on Saturday, the 21, if Technicolor were even open; arranged with Tall or Ishihara to process the roll; and then drove to Seattle and paid four hundred dollars to have the roll processed. But, of course, DeAtley had *no memory of doing any of this*. Nor did Ishihara remember processing the film.

A thought dawned on me, and I quickly returned to the apartment and called Dahinden.

"How do you know that Patterson used Kodachrome II film?" I confronted him.

He sighed in irritation. "Look, I know that Patterson bought some Kodachrome film. I have some original film that shows Patterson in it. On the edge of the film is the date 'May 1967,' or maybe 'Processed by Kodak May 1967'."

"So you do have some of Patterson's original Kodachrome film?"

"Yes. I have it locked up in a steel safe," he said defensively.

Ah, so Patterson must have shipped *some* of his film to Palo Alto, at least in May of 1967, five months before he shot the Bluff Creek footage.

"Did you ask DeAtley where the Bluff Creek film was processed?" I asked.

"He gave the impression that it vas processed by a friend of his, vherever, in Seattle," he said grumpily.

Very interesting, I thought. DeAtley told me he had no recollection of where the film was processed.

"He didn't name who the friend was?"

"I don't even vant to comment on DeAtley!" he hissed. "If he tells me the vorld is round, I vouldn't believe a fucking word he says!"

"Can you say that the film was shot on October 20, 1967, with 100 percent confidence?" I challenged the scornful Bigfooter.

"No, I don't."

"So, it may not have been?"

"So it vas shot a veek earlier," he said off-handedly.

"Therefore, Roger Patterson would be a liar if it were shot a week earlier!" The familiar knot of anger formed in my stomach. "And are you confident that Patterson used a Cine Kodak camera?"

"Yes!" he spat. "I also found out vhere Roger got the film from. You see, he vas fucking around with the camera all summer. There vere rolls. He bought a lot of film from Cliff Miller's Camera Shop. I don't know if he bought film from Sheppard's."

I would have to check out Cliff Miller, I reminded myself. By my accounting, there were three camera shops in Yakima in 1967—Sheppard's, Harvey Anderson's, and Miller's. I wondered if any of the owners was still alive.

I argued with Dahinden for an hour about Patterson's honesty. Dahinden made it clear that he would never let me look at his files on Patterson, nor would he let anyone else. I had read on the Bigfoot list that Dahinden was ill, although he was healthily rambunctious on the phone. "So when you pass away, you're going to have all your files burned?" I jabbed at him.

"I guess so. I mean, my sons aren't going to look after it."

"It seems like a waste," I said.

"Yeah, vell. Just like masturbating. It's good at the time!" he said and broke into peals of laughter.

I bantered with him for a while longer and then said good-bye.

As I began to slip Byrne's paper into a folder, I stopped to re-read portions of it. Although Byrne felt he knew where the Bluff Creek footage was processed, he admitted that the entire sequence of how the film was handled and processed was "a slightly grey area" and "a gap" in the otherwise clear sequence of events before and after the footage was shot. In addition, Byrne stated that Bob Titmus, who worked with Byrne in the 1960s during the Tom Slick expedition, was "totally incompetent in any kind of tracking work or woodsmanship." It was Titmus who told Green in a letter that he had found tracks made by Patterson's Bigfoot going up a hillside to a resting place where the creature watched Patterson and Gimlin below. Byrne wrote that Titmus left Byrne's employ "just in time to avoid being charged with fraud in connection with false claims that he made in regard to findings in connection with the phenomenon." I remembered that Dahinden had called Titmus "a story teller." Oh, well. One more blow against the film, I concluded. I placed the folder, along with all the photo lab interview folders, into a box.

I walked into the kitchen where Pat was fixing tacos. "Pat, I don't think Heironimus is going to talk, at least not now. *Ahhhh!*" I inhaled the warm, fragrant smells. "DeAtley's memory has failed him, and Gimlin won't give me an interview. I think we need to keep looking through the newspaper archives at the university."

"I'm with you, honey." She scooped meat into the taco shells.

I crammed eight tacos onto my plate and sat down on the sofa; the dining room table was heaped with mail and household objects. "We need more room," I mumbled, chewing.

"When we got married, we combined your belongings and mine," she said. "I don't know how many more boxes we can pile in the hallway."

Throughout the summer of 1999 I transcribed tapes and wrote furiously at my computer. Gradually this book took shape. On weekends we drove to the University of Washington across the Highway 520 bridge that rocks upon the surface of Lake Washington. For hours we sat at microfilm readers scanning through 1967 and 1968 issues of the *Yakima Herald Tribune*. One Sunday, a headline in the October 19, 1967, edition of the paper leaped off the page at me.

"Look at this!" I pointed. Pat quickly rolled back from her microfilm reader and rolled over to join me. The headline was: "'Big Foot Ball' on Calendar." The short article announced the first party of the year for the Yakima Elks Club. In an accompanying photo, a youthful-looking Mrs. Al DeAtley, dressed in a skirt and a turtleneck blouse, posed with pom-poms. Kneeling on the floor next to her, dressed in a football uniform and helmet, was Robert Poppoff. The text read, in part: "Mr. and Mrs. Al DeAtley and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Poppoff are in charge of decorations." The party was scheduled for October 20, 1967, from 9:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M.

"An interesting play on words," I said to Pat. "Was the name of the party based on 'Bigfoot,' or was the party simply a 'big' ball—you know, a dance, during football season? The party was supposed to take place on the day Patterson shot his film."

"It *is* interesting. Maybe just a coincidence."

"Very ironic." I laughed. "Just like I'm tall and as tall or taller than a Bigfoot, and I'm investigating Bigfoot!"

I scribbled a note to print the page for my files, then finished the roll of microfilm, rewound it, and inserted another one. An hour later, I came upon another article in the April 4, 1968 edition. "Look!" I blurted out. Pat rolled her chair over. The headline of this story was: "'Sasquatch' Movie Faces Court Test."

My pulse racing, I read the story. George W. Radford Jr. and his wife Vilma had filed a lawsuit in Yakima Superior Court against Roger Patterson. They had loaned Patterson seven hundred dollars, plus interest, on May 26, 1967. They wanted repayment, plus 5 percent of the proceeds from the release or sale of the movie *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman.* Patterson, the reporter wrote, had rented a camera from a Yakima camera shop on May 13, 1967, two weeks before he signed a contract with the Radfords.

"Eureka!" I said. "We need to print this off, too."

Back at the apartment, I found a George Radford in the Yakima phone book. I phoned. No answer. Weeks later, we drove to Yakima and picked up the Radford case file from Superior Court, then drove to George Radford's house on South Fourth Avenue. The mustard yellow house was shuttered, the grass brown. "Looks abandoned," I reported glumly to Pat as I squeezed behind the wheel of the car.

Back home, I wrote a letter to George Radford, enclosing my phone number. Nothing. Then finally one evening my phone rang. "This is George Radford. I got your letter."

I hastily cleared a space on my computer desk and snatched an empty pad of paper. After a fascinating conversation with Radford, he gave me the phone number of his mother, Vilma. Soon I had her on the phone. Her voice was vigorous and direct, which surprised me since she had recently undergone a serious operation for an ulcer on her esophagus where it joined her stomach. For a long time, she recounted her other ailments to me, which included a cancerous node the size of a nickel that had to be removed from her nose. "I know the time is coming," she said without emotion about her inevitable death. "It could be next week, next month, next year if you live that long—you might not have it because I've already lost sight in one eye."

When I gave her details of my book project, she said soberly, "I'm going to tell you right up front, I'll tell it as it is. At least the good Lord has left me with a good memory. There's a lot to tell. I'm not going to tell you anything I can't back up. Having somebody write the truth, that does matter to me, because I think it needs to be told, and I commend you for taking the initiative to do that."

And so began an investigation into another piece of the Roger Patterson story, which was moving now toward its inevitable conclusion—the truth of Patterson and his Bigfoot film.

NOTES

1. http://www.beckjord.com/bigfoot/pattersonfilm.html (February 1999).
2. http://www.beckjord.com/oj/index.html (February 1999).

18

VILMA RADFORD

And he did lie! It was all lies!

—Vilma Radford

Vilma Radford didn't know it at the time, but her encounter with Roger Patterson actually began on a particular night in May 1965. Under a full moon, Vilma, then forty-five years old, was driving two of her children home, Marta, age twelve, and George Lincoln Radford, age fifteen. Marta was sitting to Vilma's right, George was next to Marta. Vilma had taken the children to Toppenish earlier in the day to see friends. Vilma's husband, George Washington Radford, was in the Tri-Cities, sixty miles away, buying some new furniture. The Radford family had moved to Yakima from Toppenish the previous summer, and they now ran a fledgling upholstery business in Yakima. Driving along Highway 97 between Wapato and Yakima, Vilma glanced up and saw in her rearview mirror the hard, cold headlights of a van approaching her at eighty miles an hour. Right behind the van a Toppenish police car sped, its siren wailing and the multicolored lights on its roof furiously rotating.

Vilma Radford loaned Roger Patterson $700 as an investment in Roger Patterson's Bigfoot film. When Patterson refused to repay the loan, Radford sued Patterson. Photo by Pat Long.

As I listened to Vilma Radford, now an old woman, recount her story, I sawed at the egg foo yung on my plate in a futile attempt to slice off a portion. To my left Radford sat. She was twisting the head of her fork into a clump of limp noodles. To Radford's left Pat sat, sipping a glass of ice water. We were in the private corner of an empty banquet room in the Bamboo Terrace, a Chinese restaurant on West Nob Hill Boulevard in Yakima. Radford was buying us lunch. Large plates mounded with food lay before us on a lazy Susan. Between Vilma and me sat the tape recorder, its red light glowing.

This was a red-letter day for Radford, so she had dolled herself up. She wore a finely knitted black sweater with gold metallic threads and a plastic necklace festooned with black, red, and white baubles dotted with dark speckles. Gold-looped earrings inset with artificial pearls dangled from her earlobes. Her thin, wiry hair was freshly dyed a coal black. Rouge colored her pale, sagging cheeks. She had wielded a black-tipped pencil to thicken her thin eyebrows.

Stacked next to Radford's plate were manila folders chock full of information. When we first joined her at the table, she told us she had worked all through the previous day and evening, and even the morning of the interview, gathering and photocopying the material. My briefcase on the chair next to me held my own file on the Radford case.

My knife finally ripped through the egg foo yung. "And what happened next?" I asked.

Radford chewed for awhile. "The driver was drunk." Her moist, rosy-pink lips parted to reveal yellowing, crooked teeth. She said in a tremulous voice, "He owned a shoe store in Toppenish. Sergeant Gordon had been chasing him from Sunnyside. The van hit my back bumper. I remember yelling 'God help us!' twice, and George screamed, 'Brace yourself! Brace yourself!' The car bounced back off the fence. In the meantime, the van went through the fence and broke it down, and then I went through the opening on two wheels. That van drove the car *four hundred feet*. Are you sure you don't want something to eat?" she asked Pat.

"That's OK. I'll eat something later."

"She's diabetic," I explained. "She has to eat on a schedule, and she already had a snack before we came here. I guess you were hurt pretty bad, huh?"

I lifted the fork and bit into the egg foo yung, which instantly filled my mouth with the taste of paper.

Radford's gnarled hands shook slightly as she poured tea into her cup. "I was thrown toward the door and window of the car and struck my ankle on the clutch. It hurt really bad. My car ended up in the middle of the road. I had a hundred therapy treatments on my neck." The taut flesh on her jaws flexed as she chewed. "The doctors gave me shots using four-inch needles, but none of my bones was broken. The good Lord had to be with us."

"So your kids were OK?" I asked.

"Marta and George still have back problems today." Her voice had a nasal intonation. "Later that year, in November, I ended up in the hospital from a heart attack. The doctors said it was my nerves."

I choked down the egg foo yung. The pale-gray slices of pork on the tray in front of me looked limp and cold. After several attempts, I managed to drive my fork into one. I swiped it through a blob of hot mustard pooled in a saucer. "And what happened next?"

"Well. . . ." Pink blots materialized on her napkin as she dabbed at her lips. "The driver didn't even get hurt. Our car was totaled. It was hauled away. I ended up suing him. It took a long time. My lawyer was so bad I'd have to leave the courtroom, I'd be in tears."

"So the driver settled, right?" I gulped down heavy draughts of water to quench the fiery heat of the mustard.

"It was a three-and-a-half-day trial. I eventually got $14,000. After I paid the hospital and the ambulance, I had $9,000 left. My husband George bought a new International truck with some of the money. Paid cash. That left two to three thousand dollars."

"When did you actually get the fourteen thousand?" I wanted to pin down the dates as accurately as I could; I knew Patterson would enter the story soon.

She picked up a deep-fried shrimp. "I don't remember exactly, but Jerry

The Velvet Illusions
Velvet Illusions

The '60s rock band Velvet Illusions managed and funded by George and Vilma Radford. The existence of the band attracted Jerry Merritt to the Radfords. Roger Patterson viewed the Radfords as an easy source of money. Courtesy of Vilma Radford.

Merritt was in and out of our lives at that particular time. He knew about the court trial."

"How did he know?"

"Well, we knew Jerry for quite a while because of the Velvet Illusions."

"Ah, yes, the Velvet Illusions." I smiled. The name of the band was pure 1960s. She had told me about it in earlier interviews. Now she provided more crucial details.

In 1966, her son George, with six other teenage boys in Yakima, started a rock 'n' roll band named Velvet Illusions. Its members practiced almost every night in Radford's upholstery shop. George played the saxophone. To create a memorable image for her son's band, Vilma made the musicians' uniforms from orange velvet. George, her husband, became the manager of the band. With their distinctive uniforms, the band quickly became well known around Yakima. They played at high schools, radio stations, the Nob Hill Grange every Saturday night, and in the Battle of the Bands at Carpenter's Hall.

One night, Radford recalled, Merritt appeared, introduced himself to Vilma's husband, and invited the Radfords to his home on Ahtanum Road. Visiting Merritt, the Radfords were impressed with his Hollywood memorabilia. Merritt's western town didn't exist at the time, but he showed them a recording studio of sorts that he had set up in his basement. Then he proposed to the Radfords that they let him promote Velvet Illusions.

"Naturally, when you have a band, you're interested," Vilma said. She lay down her fork and pushed her plate away with her palms. "We became good friends with Merritt. He said he knew a recording studio in Seattle. We weren't familiar with that part of the business at that time."

Eventually, her husband drove the band to Seattle with Merritt and recorded a song in the studio. The title of the song was "Acid Head," and Merritt's music company, Merritt & Norman Music, Co., produced the song as a 45-rpm record under the label Tell Records. The song had been written by George Radford Jr., and his friend Steve Weed, another member of Velvet Illusions.

"Steve Weed was only fourteen, but he wrote most of the songs. Imagine! Just fourteen. He was good; he was a natural."

She cleared her throat and wadded the napkin under the edge of her plate. "Then one day Merritt said to me, 'I want you to meet this friend of mine. He's into an interesting project.' You see, George was attracted to projects."

"And this 'friend of mine' Merritt was referring to was Patterson?"

"Yes."

"And this was after you got your settlement?" My tongue touched something rubbery stuck between my teeth.

"Yes."

"And you think Merritt wanted to introduce Patterson to you because Merritt had found out about the settlement?"

"Yes."

"How do you think he found out about it?"

"Either he had asked me to do something, and I said, 'I have to go to court,' and he found out about the settlement that way, or because my husband told him. Heavens, I've eaten too much."

I stared at the plates of unfinished food. "Yes. Uh, that was good. Thank you very much for lunch. So what happened next?"

"Well, Jerry Merritt brings Roger down to the shop and introduces him." The upholstery shop was attached to their house. "Merritt said, 'This is the guy I've been telling you about, George. You guys talk, and I'll be back. I've got something to do.' Then Merritt left."

After small talk, Patterson plunged into the subject of Bigfoot. "He was talking about where they'd seen Bigfoot and how many people were after Bigfoot. He didn't ask for money outright when he started. He wanted to get a feel first." She sniggered, revealing a gap where a tooth used to be. "He had his book, of course, and all these prints—actual casts of Bigfoot. He had photographs, maybe three or four. He gave me the photos."

An image of the briefcase Patterson had left behind on Bob Swanson's print shop counter popped into my mind. "Did he take all of this stuff out of a briefcase?" I asked.

"There might have been a briefcase. He had all these things with him. He autographed his book right in front of me and gave it to me. "

I envisioned Patterson strutting quickly about the shop and babbling as he brought Bigfoot to life, piece by piece, with his evidence.

"How long did this go on?" I asked.

"Two to three hours."

"Really! That's a long time for someone to talk. But I've learned that he was a talker."

"*Oh, he was!* He could talk the shirt right off your back. When he first was into conversation, he didn't right away ask for money. I wondered what he wanted. You know, I said to myself, 'Why is this man so interested in showing us all this? What's going on?'"

A waitress approached our table. "All finished? Are you sure you don't want something, dear?" she asked Pat.

"No, I'm fine."

The waitress began clearing the table.

"He didn't ask for the money until the end," Vilma said. "He said that there were sightings in California and that he needed money."

"He said that he needed money?"

"That was his spiel." She drummed on the tabletop with her forefinger. "He said he *needed* the money. He said, 'I need to make a trip down there.' He didn't tell me he was renting a camera."

I locked onto Vilma's eyes. "Did he mention anywhere during the two to three hours, 'I need to go photograph a Bigfoot'? Did he ever say that?"

"Oh, yeah," she nodded.

I focused my senses. "He *did* say that?"

"Oh, yeah. Because he wanted to prove that there was a Bigfoot, and get a sighting of Bigfoot. He was careful about what he said."

"Vilma, is it OK if we take your picture? I'd like to put your photo in the book."

"Well, that's fine with me."

I nodded to Pat.

It was very important to test Radford's memory. With my open briefcase on my lap, I pulled out the file labeled "Radford" and a list of questions.

"This must be quite familiar to you," I said, pointing to a copy of the contract the Radfords had signed.

"Yes. I have the original." She opened one of her folders. "See."

I could not conceal my delight as I looked down at a sheet of paper: "This is the actual contract!" Roger Patterson's original signature, in blue ink, seemed to glow on the sheet of paper.

In a split second, I was hurtled into the past, to a clearly defined moment in time where indisputable facts reigned supreme. I had been searching for this moment for a long, long time. The contract, a genuine article, had the eerie effect of validating the worth of all my research efforts to date.

I carefully picked up the contract like a rare gem and read out loud:

> May 26, 1967. This is a legal and binding agreement between Roger C. Patterson, referred to as borrower, and George and Vilma Radford, referred to as lendors [*sic*]. George and Vilma Radford agree to loan Roger C. Patterson, the amount of, Seven-Hundred Dollars, ($700.00), as of this day, May 26, 1967, for expenses in connection with filming of BIGFOOT - AMERICAS [*sic*] ADOMINABLE [*sic*] SNOWMAN.

I smiled at the several typos, which included "adominable" instead of "abominable."

"And let's see." I ran my finger down the lines of the contract. "He was to pay you $850 by June 10, 1967, and you were to receive 5 percent of the revenues from the movie."

"That's right. That was the deal."

I said, "The contract actually gives the title of the movie, *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman.* How did you end up with this title?"

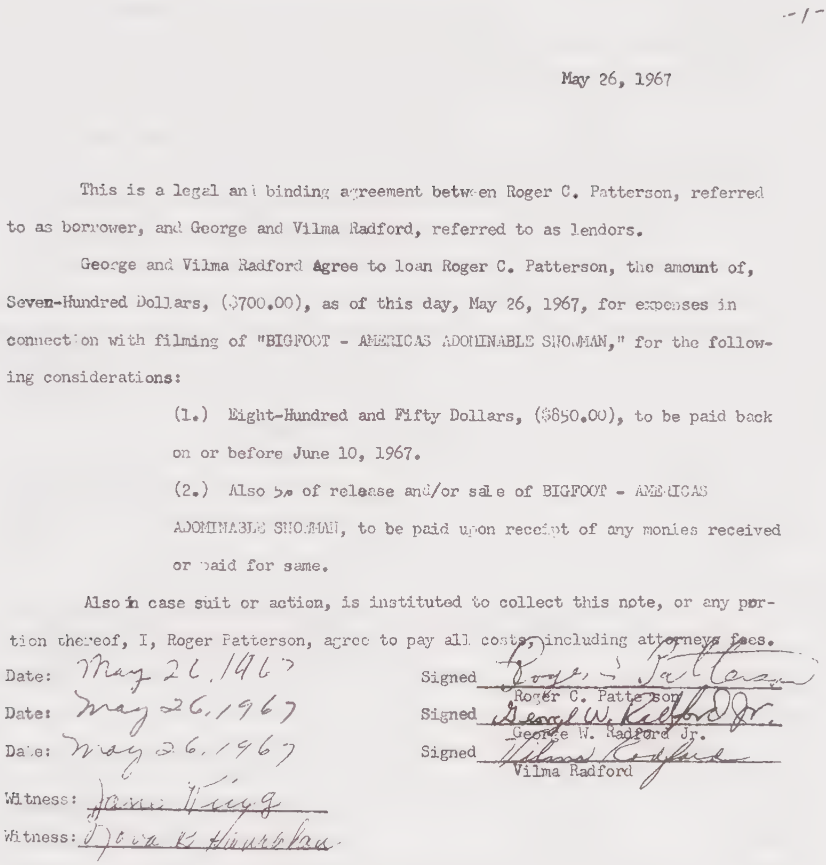
"From him," she said.

"From him?"

"Well, sure!"

Well, I'll be damned, I said to myself.

Meanwhile, little, silent explosions of silver light brightened Radford's face as Pat stepped from here and there about the table taking photos of Radford.



-1-

May 26, 1967

This is a legal and binding agreement between Roger C. Patterson, referred to as borrower, and George and Vilma Radford, referred to as lendors.

George and Vilma Radford Agree to loan Roger C. Patterson, the amount of, Seven-Hundred Dollars, ($700.00), as of this day, May 26, 1967, for expenses in connection with filming of "BIGFOOT - AMERICAS ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN," for the following considerations:

(1.) Eight-Hundred and Fifty Dollars, ($850.00), to be paid back on or before June 10, 1967.

(2.) Also 5% of release and/or sale of BIGFOOT - AMERICAS ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN, to be paid upon receipt of any monies received or paid for same.

Also in case suit or action, is instituted to collect this note, or any portion thereof, I, Roger Patterson, agree to pay all costs, including attorneys fees.

Date: May 26, 1967 Signed Roger Patterson
Roger C. Patterson
Date: May 26, 1967 Signed George W. Radford Jr.
George W. Radford Jr.
Date: May 26, 1967 Signed Vilma Radford
Vilma Radford
Witness: [illegible] King
Witness: [illegible]

Copy of the Vilma Radford-Roger Patterson "Bigfoot" contract. Courtesy of Vilma Radford.

Here, directly in front of me, might be the best evidence yet that Patterson was a hoaxer. He had concocted the title of a movie in May 1967, *five months before* he successfully filmed a Bigfoot in Northern California. The Radfords' loan would finance the documentary shot on the South Fork and of a "real" Bigfoot to bring the title to life.

I formed my words carefully because I needed to make certain Radford's memory was clear. "Do you *distinctly* remember him saying, 'I need to have some money because I know there's a Bigfoot down in California, and I want to go film it to have proof?' Something like that?"

"Yes," she answered unequivocally. "I knew he was going with Bob

[Gimlin]. However, I didn't know Bob at that time. He mentioned [him as] 'a friend of mine.'"

I circled again, restating the question. "You remember that basically the reason why he asked you for the money was *to go and film a Bigfoot*?"

"Oh, yeah," she with certainty. "He needed to make a trip to find that Bigfoot so that he could photograph it so that it would confirm what he had said, OK?" She gave me a firm look. "He said, 'I'm sure there's a Bigfoot there. They've got one down there. I know they've got one, and I'm going down there to see if I can see it.' In the meantime, he had all this publicity going on. See, Roger Patterson was not dumb. He had the evidence, the casts. He wanted to go down and get pictures of it. Oh, he was going to carry it way up there! He had the book, of course, already. All he had to have was something to prove that he had seen the thing. He talked a good talk. He acted like he knew exactly what he was talking about. He made the pitch to me *real good*."

I picked up the recorder and moved my chair closer to Radford. The metallic whine of Pat's camera sounded as the camera automatically rewound the roll of film. Pat sat down and replaced the roll with a fresh one.

"But he didn't come right out immediately and ask for money?" I held the recorder closer.

"No. He says, 'I'm involved in this deal, and I've got to prove, and so I need to go down there and see if I can photograph one.' Well," she smiled, "he went down there and photographed it." She sipped some ice water. "I wasn't enthralled with the idea of loaning him money at first. My husband was more thrilled with it. What I'm thinking is, 'Why is this guy giving us this spiel about this and what not? What does he want?' Well, I eventually found out what he wanted. He wanted to borrow money. He asked for it about ten or fifteen minutes before he left."

Pat stood up and shot more pictures. "Why don't you two sit a little more closely together?" she said. I pushed my chair over a foot, and Radford and I showed our teeth for the camera.

Radford picked up the thread of the story. Later that night, she discussed Patterson's request with her husband. "I said to George, 'Only under one condition, that he signs a note.'" Afterward, she sat down and typed up a contract. Patterson phoned early the next morning. "Patterson said, 'Well, what do you think about the idea?' George said, 'We have a couple of questions. If you come down here, why, we'll talk about it first.'"

Patterson soon showed up.

"And I said to him, 'Roger, we're not loaning any money without a note.' He said, 'Oh, that's perfectly all right.'"

After Patterson answered the Radfords' questions to their satisfaction, they all signed two identical contracts, one for each party, in the upholstery shop.

"We needed witnesses. I told him that my next-door neighbors would come down and sign the contracts. No, he didn't have time, he said. I realized later that he didn't want to be part of anything. He wasn't going to get trapped. Well, as it turns out, he got trapped anyway because it was a legal paper."

Radford phoned Jane King and Nora Hanrahan, her neighbors, and they came to the shop and signed the contracts in Patterson's presence.

"I remember George said after Roger was gone, 'I hope he isn't full of bull-shit.' I said, 'I hope so, too, because I just gave him my money.'"

The waitress slid a dish of fortune cookies onto the empty lazy Susan.

"Did you loan Patterson cash?" I asked.

"I gave him just enough money to rent a camera. He immediately went down and found a Bigfoot."

I wondered if Patterson did, in fact, use the money, which was quite a bit, to "just" rent the camera from Sheppard's Camera Shop, or was the money also for something else?

"Hold on. Let me flip over this tape."

Radford brushed crumbs off her lap.

"Okay, we're rolling again," I said. "What happened next? You went to California?"

"No, just George went to California with the band."

She related how Merritt, months before the loan, had convinced the Radfords to set up a business to promote and sell Velvet Illusions' records. Merritt said his former Hollywood manager Buddy Motola could help. All the Radfords had to do was take the band to Hollywood, set up an office, and work with Motola.

In the spring of 1967 Radford's husband accompanied Merritt to Hollywood to meet Motola. After the Radfords' son George graduated from high school in June 1967, his father took him and the rest of the band to Hollywood where he rented a house and leased offices at Hollywood and Vine.

June 10, 1967, the date Patterson was to repay the $700 loan, came and went. Vilma gave it little thought; she was busy settling things at home, including selling some property, before joining her husband and son in Hollywood.

In late August, Vilma and her husband packed up a van with furniture and other belongings and drove down to Hollywood. "We had three offices next door to where Lawrence Welk was," said Radford. "Harry James's band was right across the street and one building down. I used to eat lunch with his future wife after he divorced Betty Grable. I ate the *best* hot dogs and German sausage."

By this time the Radfords had established the Velvet Illusions as a corporation with George as president. Motola was the music director, and Jack Oliphant, Merritt's former publicist, handled the publicity. Merritt also had a branch office of the company in Yakima. Velvet Illusions, Inc., produced one of Merritt's records in the summer of 1967, *Town of Fools*.

"This Oliphant is interesting," I commented. "How did Oliphant become the Velvet Illusions' publicist?"

"I think Buddy Motola recommended him."

"When did Oliphant start publicizing the band?"

"About the middle of the summer in '67."

"When your husband took your son and the band to Hollywood, did Merritt go with them?"

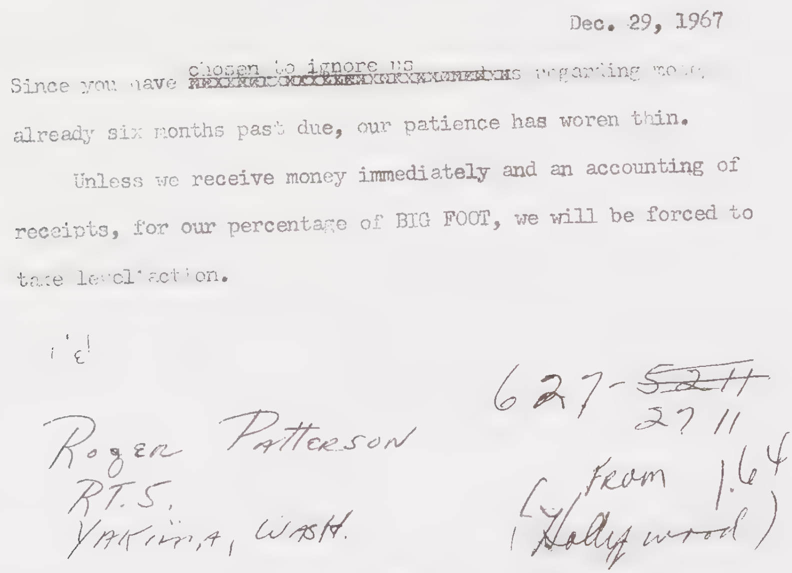
Radford shook her head. "Merritt just knew people down there. He had the connections. He was in touch with us, though, during the summer."

"So you were still in Hollywood when you heard that Patterson had shot his famous Bigfoot film, right?" I asked.

"Yeah. I think I heard it from Jerry. And the story was in all the papers in California. I thought, 'Boy, he found one!'"

Radford didn't suspect a hoax at that time. She was "on the fence" because the papers were quoting scientists who were saying there might be a real Bigfoot in the film. Besides, she had loaned Patterson money, and *if he had filmed* a real Bigfoot, she stood to reap 5 percent of the film's profits. But she also wanted her loan repaid, so she tried to contact Patterson from Hollywood. "I asked Merritt for Roger's phone number, but when I called Roger, no one answered. I never could get him. Here, I want to show you something." Her wrinkled fingers trembled as she opened one of her manila folders. "I kept notes I wrote and sent to him."

Radford had taped onto a sheet of paper the original versions of two notes in draft form that she had typed while in Hollywood and had mailed to Patterson at "Route 5, Yakima, Wash." One of the notes, dated December 29, 1967, read:



Dec. 29, 1967

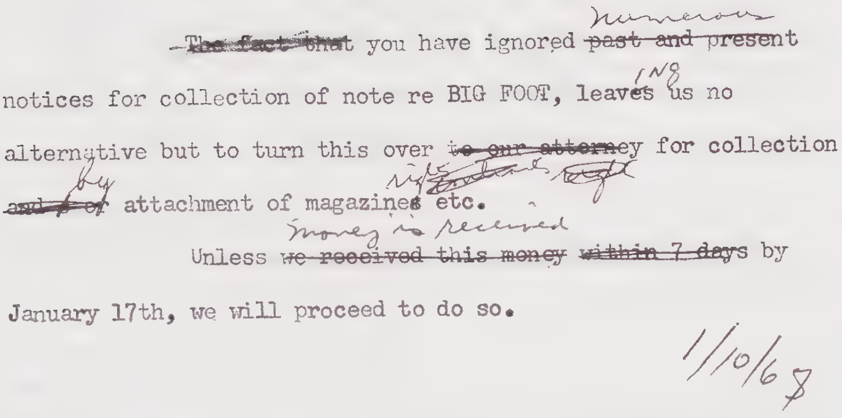
Since you have chosen to ignore us regarding note, already six months past due, our patience has woren thin.

Unless we receive money immediately and an accounting of receipts, for our percentage of BIG FOOT, we will be forced to take legal action.

Roger Patterson
RT. 5,
Yakima, Wash.

627-~~5211~~
2711
(From 1.64
Hollywood)

Copy of note dated December 29, 1967, to Roger Patterson from Vilma Radford threatening legal action for breach of contract. Courtesy of Vilma Radford.

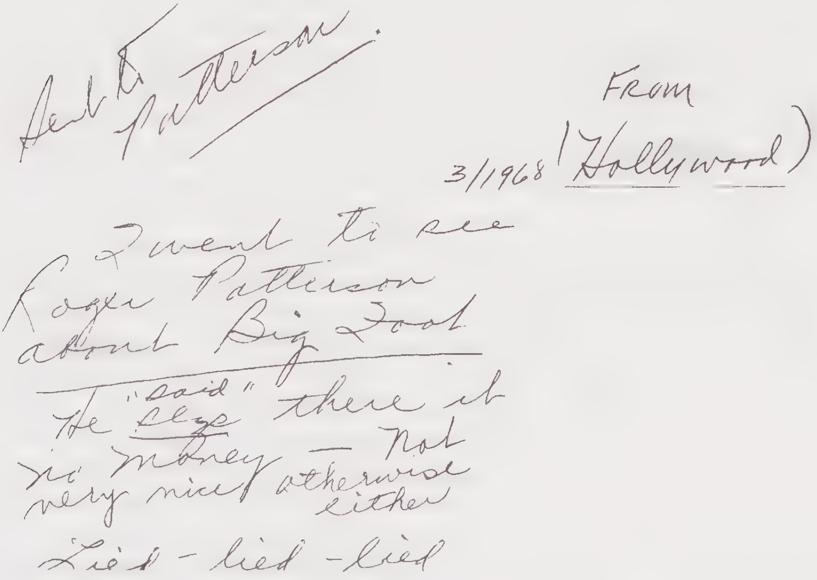


~~The fact that~~ you have ignored numerous ~~past and present~~ notices for collection of note re BIG FOOT, leav~~es~~ING us no alternative but to turn this over ~~to our attorney~~ for collection ~~and / or~~ by attachment of magazine~~s~~ rights ~~[illegible]~~, ~~[illegible]~~ etc.

Unless ~~we received this money~~ money is received ~~within 7 days~~ by January 17th, we will proceed to do so.

1/10/68

Another note, dated January 10, 1968, to Roger Patterson from Vilma Radford demanding loan repayment. Courtesy of Vilma Radford.



Sent to Patterson.

From

3/1968 (Hollywood)

I went to see Roger Patterson about Big Foot

He "said" else there is no money — Not very nice otherwise either

Lied - lied - lied

Note written by Vilma Radford after her visit to Roger Patterson's house in March 1968. "Lied - lied - lied," she wrote of Patterson. Courtesy of Vilma Radford.

> Since you have chosen to ignore us regarding money already six months past due, our patience has woren [*sic*] thin. Unless we receive money immediately and an accounting of receipts, for our percentage of BIG FOOT, we will be forced to take legel [*sic*] action.

The second note, dated January 10, 1968, read:

> You have ignored numerous notices for collection of note re BIG FOOT, leaving us no alternative but to turn this over for collection by attachment of magazine rights, etc. Unless money is received by January 17th, we will proceed to do so.

"He didn't answer them, ever. Now, this note here," Radford said, pointing to the bottom third of the sheet, "I wrote after I came back to Yakima. I wrote it right after I visited Roger at his house." The handwritten note was dated March 1968. I read it aloud:

> I went to see Roger Patterson about Big Foot. He said there is no money—Not very nice otherwise either. Lied - lied - lied.

"And he did lie!" Radford said, fire in her eyes. "It was all lies!"

"Amazing!" I exclaimed. "You've kept these notes for, let's see, *thirty-three years*."

She smiled.

"'Lied, lied, lied,'" I quoted from the note. "Tell me what happened when you visited Patterson out at Tampico."

"Well, things didn't work out in Hollywood. The band fell apart. We had spent all this money, and we had sent out records and recorded and did all kinds of things. I came back to Yakima in February or March of 1968. George stayed in Hollywood to wrap things up. I did need the money then. I found out Roger's phone had been shut off once or twice. That didn't surprise me. He either had it shut off, or he didn't pay his bill. It's as simple as that. I told Jerry Merritt, 'I need to see Roger. He owes me money' because Jerry and Roger *were* good friends. Jerry said, 'Well, I don't know how else to tell you except to go out there and catch him.' I didn't tell Jerry, of course, when I was going because I knew he'd tell Roger, and he wouldn't be there. I knew where he lived because Jerry told me where he lived. Well, Roger's wife, Patty, answered the door. Roger was sitting in the living room. He was starting to get up, and I said, 'I need to talk to you.' Patty went into another room. He was stone-faced, as stone-faced as they come. I never will forget it. I was saying to myself, 'What am I dealing with?' Roger was a bit on the nasty side. I should say a little bit more than on the nasty side, and that surprised me. He was also confident. I suppose he thought that this is just some dumb woman and that, 'I can get away with this.' He said that he didn't know where the note was." She mimicked Patterson in a sarcastic voice:

"'I don't even know where that note is.' That's just the way he said it, not in too pleasant of a voice."

"Is it fair to say that he was arrogant?" I asked in an attempt to understand further.

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I think that would be a good description. He was very different than when he was trying to sell us on the idea, I'll tell you that. It was like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde deal, you now what I mean? Real smooth about that."

"What did you say to him?"

"'Roger, I need that money, and you promised it to me. And I haven't been able to get a-hold of you, can't get a-hold of you on your phone.' He said, 'There is no money.' He said he had this money coming, but there was no money. I told him, 'You know, Roger, you signed the note and all.' He said, 'Awww, I don't even know where that note is.' He said, 'You got to prove it to me.' Knowing how he did other things, he probably just threw it in the wastebasket. I said, 'Roger, I'm going to tell you something. You either make some effort to do this, or *I'm going to take it to court.*' And I'm the one who filed it in court."

"What did Roger look like when he was talking to you?"

"I don't know exactly how to express it, but he was like an actor, you know, that can change—you know what I mean?—can change his facial expressions to go along with what he says. He was very, very different. He was *good*. That wasn't the Roger Patterson I had loaned the money to, you know what I mean?"

I knew what she meant. "How long were you in his house?"

"Maybe twenty to thirty minutes. Of course, his wife brought him a blanket to put on him and brought him something to drink. He wasn't feeling good." She added sarcastically, "Et cetera, et cetera."

"So you probably left his house feeling—"

"Pretty bad. He was glad to get rid of me. I felt like I was intruding, I did."

"Did you feel like you had been used?"

"Well, I did. After that it got worse and worse and worse, and I'm going, 'Oh, my God!'"

She was referring to the stress of her lawsuit. "So you took him to court?"

"Yeah. I found Bill McArdle, an attorney."

"Before we talk about the lawsuit, what's this?" I gestured to a receipt in her folder.

The receipt recorded $200, in the form of a check, that Vilma's husband loaned Jerry Merritt. A note on the receipt read: "Contingent on 10% of share of Big Foot Contract." Merritt's signature was on the receipt.

I looked at Radford. "It looks like Merritt borrowed money from George, and Merritt was supposed to repay it once he received his own 10 percent share of Patterson's Bigfoot movie."

She shrugged. "Jerry knew I had money because he borrowed money from George a week before. He knew I got this settlement. So it was a good setup, wasn't it?"

I wondered if Merritt borrowed the $200 to give to Patterson, and when he told Patterson that Vilma had her own settlement money, the two plotted to scam her. I asked her opinion.

"Well, it could have been prearranged. It was kind of an odd deal. They had some kind of planning. How far they went with the plan, I have no idea."

"OK." I took a drink from my glass. "You found an attorney."

"Yeah. He was a very, very nice guy," she said wistfully. "He never yelled or screamed. He wasn't dramatic. He wasn't nasty." She showed McArdle, her attorney, the contract and described her problem.

"I told him about how I couldn't find Roger. He said, 'It doesn't matter whether I know where he is or not. He's in big trouble because I've had several other people come through here wanting us to represent them, that he's cheated money out of. I didn't take any of those cases. Only for you, I'll get in it for you.'"

I browsed through a number of legal documents in her folders. They told the story of her lawsuit. "Did you ever get anything out of Patterson?" I asked. The documents seemed to say she didn't.

"Rene Dahinden gave me $100. That's the only compensation I got. Roger never paid anything, not even one cent of anything."

Indeed, in her folder a document dated November 16, 1974, stated that Dahinden paid her $100 to buy her interest in Patterson's film. Interesting. I would have to explore this angle later.

"Rene wanted me to go to court with him one time," Radford recalled, "and I said, 'Why should I go to court? It's already cost me all this money. I can't get anything.'"

She refreshed her cup of tea. "I remember that a representative from a credit company came by to visit me at the shop. She was trying to find Roger. She had a notebook *over four inches thick*. I said to her, 'Oh, that's all your clients.' She said, 'No, these are all Roger Patterson's bills.' I remember her patting her hand on the notebook. I'm going, 'Oh, my gosh!' I was in complete shock, to tell you the truth. I couldn't believe that somebody had that many unpaid bills. She had heard that I was involved and asked me if I knew where Roger was. I said, 'No, I haven't seen him at all, and I can't find him myself.'"

Radford raised the steaming cup to her lips. "I understood then why Patterson's phone would ring but he'd never answer when I called him. I understood when the collection woman came to the shop. With that many deals, there had to be someone calling him."

Later, although she couldn't remember who told her, she learned that Patterson had sold *200 percent* of the movie to other people. "But they didn't have any note. It was all verbal. I was surprised at that. I cannot fathom anyone. . . ." She clucked her tongue. "You've got to be pretty boldfaced, and you got to be a big liar, and a good actor."

"What are these?" I said as I came upon a pile of letters Radford had stapled together. Quickly thumbing through them, I saw that they were from Dahinden to Radford and from Dahinden to Patty Patterson, including several letters from attorneys.

"Did you know that Mrs. Patterson said that Roger Patterson's signature on the contract was *false*?" Radford said as I perused the letters.

"What!"

"It's in one of those letters."

I quickly scanned Dahinden's letters, and indeed, here was proof of Radford's assertion. In a letter dated November 8, 1976, from Dahinden to Radford, Dahinden wrote: "Mrs. P told her Attorney that all signetures [*sic*] on all the papers were forgerys [*sic*]." Also, in a letter dated September 15, 1976, from Alan D. Campbell, who was representing Dahinden in his lawsuit against Patty Patterson, to Randy Marquis, who was representing Patty Patterson, Campbell wrote, "Mrs. Patterson's contention that the May 26, 1967 [contract] is a forgery appears to be frivolous. Admittedly, I am not a handwriting expert, but Mr. Patterson's authenticated signature bears a striking resemblance to that appearing on the 1967 contract. Furthermore, the witnesses to Mr. Patterson's signature are still available."

Radford snorted and said, "Mrs. Patterson can say what she wants to, but *she* wasn't there. Her husband was."

Ridiculous, I thought. Why would anyone believe that the Radfords created a phony contract in order to *sue* Roger Patterson, who the Radfords didn't even know until May 26, 1967?

Then I found another curious letter in Radford's folder. "This letter is from someone in Hollywood named 'Jack' to you and George. It's dated April 23, 1968."

Radford leaned over to examine it. "That letter was from Jack Oliphant. I sent him the clipping from the Yakima paper about my lawsuit against Patterson."

I read out loud the opening line of Oliphant's letter: "Sorry for the delay in replying to your letter containing the illuminating clipping." Further down the letter I noticed that Radford had drawn a box around three of Oliphant's paragraphs and noted next to the box: "BigFoot [*sic*]!" I read the paragraphs out loud:

> With regard to Patterson. He must be plain stupid to have allowed it to go so far. He must have known it would have brought a great deal of adverse publicity.
>
> I wrote to DeAtley demanding a settlement within a period of ten days; but, of course, did not receive a reply; which means legal proceedings. I shall be going for the three of them collectively and individually.
>
> Since they are resident out of this State, the matter will be handled by an attorney in your neck of the woods.

"I wonder what this was all about?" I asked, then suddenly I remembered that Merritt had told me in interviews that he hooked up Oliphant with Patterson to serve as Patterson's publicity agent; and that Oliphant had arranged a cocktail party for Patterson, Gimlin, and Mason in New York City to entice people to invest in the Bigfoot footage. Apparently, from my reading of the words in Oliphant's letter to Radford, Oliphant had rendered services to the Bigfoot Enterprises partnership of DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin, and they had not paid him for those services. Or perhaps Oliphant, in the letter, was offering to represent Radford to force Patterson to pay back the $700 loan.

"Jack was a very nice gentleman," Radford reminisced as I scrutinized the letter for more clues. "A quietly spoken one. He knew his onions. He was straight about it. Whatever Jack said, I'd believe. I would. He was honest. Jack was a caring person. He was the one who told me, 'When you get back to Yakima, the first thing you do is sue'—and he didn't say it very kindly, 'that S.O.B.' He also said, 'You won't get an answer from him [Patterson],' which we didn't."

"I find it curious that Oliphant represented you and Velvet Illusions, and *then* he ended up representing Patterson and DeAtley and Gimlin."

I explained to Radford how DeAtley set up Bigfoot Enterprises with Patterson and Gimlin in early November 1967 in Hollywood where the Radfords were living and operating Velvet Illusions, Inc.

"Did you know about Bigfoot Enterprises?" I asked, and I drained the last of the water in my glass.

"It surprised us," she said and glared, "because we were *right there*, and Patterson didn't come and see us. Later Jack said to us, 'Didn't you know he was down here? Didn't you see him?' I told him, 'No.'"

So while Patterson was setting up Bigfoot Enterprises with DeAtley behind Vilma's back, he was continuing to avoid repaying the loan.

"I wonder how Oliphant got involved with Patterson in the first place," I said.

"Well, Patterson and DeAtley needed some way to publicize Roger's movie, and they didn't know how to do it. The guy who helped was Oliphant. See, Merritt knew Oliphant. Merritt greased the skids, so to speak. Jerry paved the way. He may not have done it directly. He did it through Motola, and Jack Oliphant got sucked into it. They never paid Oliphant or anything they promised. All it was was promises. What they did was use my husband as a decoy, so to speak. They went through him to do it knowing that Jack was working for us. Of course, Jack would do anything without signing a paper."

Well, I mused, however Oliphant's business relation with Bigfoot Enterprises came about, something unpleasant apparently happened to drive the upright gentleman publicist to want to sue DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin.

"Jack thought Roger was a phony," she said.

I skimmed through the rest of Radford's folders. She had saved a number of Bigfoot clippings from over the years.

The waitress placed a small, black plastic tray with the check in front of Radford.

"Well, have we covered everything?" I asked her.

"Boy, we've been talking a long time!"

"Yes, more than two hours."

"Oh, I've made a copy of all this documentation for you." Radford pulled out of her bag a set of manila folders held together by rubber bands. "Everything I have you now have."

"Thank you!" I snapped open my briefcase and, with reverence, placed the folders inside. I nudged the recorder closer. "Well, Vilma, what are your final thoughts about Roger Patterson?"

"Well," she said and began straightening up her folders, "he was what I call a con artist, a real one. He was the truest con artist I ever met. I never met anybody like that. It surprised me to no end. I was just speechless. Roger used people, got done with them, and then he went on and did it to somebody else over and over again. He didn't take any responsibility. The only thing I've said in my own self-defense is I guess I'm not any different than anybody else."

She lifted her bag off the floor, placed it in her lap, and stacked the folders inside it. "It was one of the best learning experiences I've ever had in my life. Maybe it saved me from some other things in life." She laid her credit card in the plastic tray. "At this point, I'll be honest with you, nothing surprises me. I've found that for money, people *will do anything.* It's like these mergers. They take over, because they want to be bigger than somebody else. It's all money. It's *greed*. You know who pays for it? The little guy. Having somebody write the truth, that does matter to me because I think it needs to be told. I think it's wonderful you're writing a book on Patterson."

I smiled in gratitude. "Well, Vilma, we want to thank you for your time. You obviously put a lot of energy into this interview."

"Look!" she said. "We didn't eat our fortune cookies."

"You're right. What's Chinese food without fortune cookies?" I cracked open one of the cookies. When I read my fortune, I started laughing. "'You have a yearning for perfection,'" I quoted. "Well, that's me and the Roger Patterson story. I want only the facts. I want it as accurate as possible."

Radford teased the white strip of paper from her cookie. "Ha! 'The liar is not believed even though he tell the truth.'"

"What a coincidence," I said. "We were *just talking* about lies."

She nodded and laughed and pushed herself up from her chair and slowly accompanied Pat and I out of the restaurant, her right leg dragging. "The doctors tell me it's the bones in my knee. I may not be able to walk much longer."

Outside, we exchanged a few more stories, and then Radford lifted herself into her old, beat-up Plymouth. Pat and I waved good-bye.

* * *

Back in Bellevue, I called Vilma's ex-husband George Washington Radford to see if he remembered anything useful. "I'm trying to provide the real story about Roger Patterson and his movie," I told him.

"I can tell you the real story." He emitted a deep, phlegmatic cough. "He was a *crook!"*

He confirmed Vilma's story that Merritt brought Patterson to the shop.

"What was the purpose of that visit?"

"To get money! Patterson figured we were a soft touch, which we were. We were suckers. He was a really smooth talker. Of course Jerry Merritt was, too. He was phony as hell."

"From what I can determine, when Merritt came back to Yakima from Hollywood in 1965 or 1966, he was down and out."

"Oh, he never had two nickels to rub together," he said in a bassoon voice.

"He came back from Hollywood broke?"

"Well, yeah. Because they threw him out. They just dropped him, because they couldn't handle him." Radford went on to say that Merritt had a drinking problem when he was in Hollywood.

I asked Radford how Oliphant had entered the picture. Merritt introduced Oliphant to George Radford, he said, not to Motola as Vilma remembered. "Jack Oliphant had a list of big, big, big names. He had made them stars. Dorothy Lamour was one of many."

He reminisced about the Velvet Illusions and how close the band had come to stardom. "I spent $30,000 on those kids. It was every nickel I owned. While we were in Hollywood, we played in front of Mayor Yorty at a private show with several thousand people and dignitaries in the audience. The Elvis Presley of Japan was there. We stole the show from him. Then, we was due to go on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Dorothy Lamour was going to introduce us to the world on the show. And the kids blew it."

The seven teenagers, all living together in a house, grew tired of being cooped up and waiting for George Radford to arrange shows for them. Radford had flown to Chicago to hold a promotional meeting with one of Bing Crosby's sons. When he came back, most of the band had gone back to Yakima. "I'm a little bitter about it yet," he said dourly.

"With Patterson, it sounds like you were the victim of a scam."

"Absolutely!" he boomed. "That's what the thing was from the very beginning. You betcha. I've got a lot older and wiser since then."

"So that's the first and last time you were taken?"

"First and last. You betcha, that was the first *and* last."

"You've since learned how to detect people like Patterson?"

"You betcha. I don't even trust my own grandmother, if she was alive." He broke into roaring laughter. A few more minutes of talk, and we hung up.

Months later as I was writing the first draft of a chapter devoted to Merritt, I remembered something Merritt had told me. Curious, I opened Merritt's transcript file on my hard drive and did a word search: "$700." Yes, there it was in the transcript. I had commented to Merritt that Patterson had planned to make a Bigfoot documentary and sell it.

Merritt:	Yeah, he had so much faith in it.
Long:	And to sell it to a Hollywood company.
Merritt:	Yeah. We ran out of money. We had $700. Well, Roger and I went down to Hollywood to try to get money.[1]

Amazingly, more than thirty years later, Merritt had remembered that figure. The $700 must have been the money Radford loaned Patterson! Facts about Merritt gelled in my mind as I pecked through the transcript to find more hints. Merritt had been financially strapped when he came home from Hollywood. He wasn't unlike Patterson in that regard. Merritt was Patterson's link to the Radfords' money and to Merritt's Hollywood contacts, Oliphant and Motola. The summer of 1967 was Patterson's summer of movie-making and preparation for October 20, 1967, and what I could only conclude now must have been a hoax. But Heironimus wasn't talking. I ground my teeth together.

Months passed as I continued to write the first draft of this book. On October 24, 1999, I called Heironimus.

"When is your story coming out on TV, Bob?"

"Oh," he said nonchalantly, "we're kind of playing around with it."

"Hey, it's been nine months and nothing's come out."

"Well," he said softly, "that's the way it goes. It takes quite a while sometimes."

"Why hasn't anyone bought your story?" I said sharply.

"You'll have to talk to my attorney. I'm advised not to say anything yet."

I blurted out, "Do you have the Bigfoot suit in your house?"

He paused. "Uh, well, I couldn't say that."

"This Roger Patterson story is an amazing one. I'm surprised no one's looked into after all these years."

"Well, we're trying," he said in a sing-song voice. "I'm not going it give it away."

I hung up.

"Almost a whole year has passed since we started this investigation," I said to Pat days later. We were standing together on the patio and watching the rhododendron bushes along the walkway tremble under the first gusts of a rainstorm. "Heironimus may never talk," I said gloomily.

"Don't give up hope," Pat said, and she put her arm around my waist. "He'll talk. You'll see."

Months of rain and cold wind blew against the apartment as I continued to write. The year 2000 was looming. Pat and I celebrated New Year's with Pat's son Chris and his wife Kristi in front of the Space Needle in Seattle. The crowd was small; a terrorist had been arrested at the Canadian border with bomb-making materials. But we watched the brilliant pyrotechnics with joy.

The end of January 2000 was approaching. The anniversary of Heironimus's "outing" as the Man in the Bigfoot Suit (anonymously, of course) in the *Yakima Herald* on January 30 approached. On the evening of the thirtieth, I called him.

"Bob, guess what today is?"

"I don't know," he said darkly.

"It's the thirtieth. A year has gone by, and you still haven't told your story. I don't think you ever are."

"How do you know?" he said angrily.

"Look, after a year, you should have sold it. You haven't."

"Talk to my attorney," he said in a depressed tone, and he hung up.

Well, if Heironimus wouldn't talk, I still had plenty to write, more leads to follow, and lots of the public record to wade through. I wheeled around and looked at the overwhelming stacks of case files from the criminal and civil courts in Yakima. I didn't welcome reading these dry documents a fourth time, but I knew that the Roger Patterson story was incomplete without a thorough analysis of them.

And so, through the spring and summer of 2000, as I read the scores of pages of legal documents, I grumbled inwardly at the financial wreckage Patterson had left in his wake. As I did, I thought often of Heironimus's bitter hold out, as he tried to milk a few last dollars from a dead man's scam. "Roger, Roger, Roger, Roger," I found myself saying. "Even in death, you keep the money machine working."

NOTE

1. Personal interview with Jerry Merritt, November 29, 1998.

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THE PUBLIC RECORD

You try to deal with Pat Patterson. She's all business.

—Rene Dahinden

I had discovered that the old Bigfooters had their own files on Patterson. This included Dahinden, who early on had suspected Patterson of hoaxing. But he wouldn't allow me to read the files. However, I had Mason's file and Radford's, which among other items, contained copies of legal documents and letters Dahinden had written. His letters revealed more than his desire to expose a con artist; they revealed a story of his own lust for money.

I stacked all the relevant material in chronological order on my desk, and for months I chipped away, ferreting out the facts of Patterson in the public and private record. In the process, much was disclosed about Dahinden. What finally crawled forth was an enormous mess that reeked of criminality, intrigue, deceit, and betrayal. Patterson had created the mess while he was alive and had left it behind for the living. But it was a mess that Dahinden was happy to inherit, for it glinted with gold.

The public record begins with Patterson's theft of the sixteen-millimeter camera from Sheppard's Camera Shop on May 13, 1967, already discussed, and his subsequent arrest. On November 28, 1967, he escaped prosecution.

About eighteen months after Patterson's arrest, on May 20, 1969, Yakima Adjustment Service, a local collection agency, was given a judgment in open court to garnish Patterson and Northwest Research Association's bank account for $142.25, which had been outstanding from January 24, 1964, the year he traveled to Bluff Creek to find his first Bigfoot track. Having talked to Pat Mason, I knew that Northwest Research Association was a Bigfoot organization that either Patterson, DeAtley, or Pat Mason—or all of them—funded (I surmised) in late 1967 or 1968, to the tune of $75,000. However, the court file proved the organization existed for at least three years *before* Patterson shot his Bigfoot footage, and even before Patterson's book, released in 1966. Patterson, it seemed, was building a Bigfoot company far earlier than commonly believed. Also puzzling was Patterson's name listed "a/k/a Clint Patterson" among the defendants. Why the alias?

Just as mysterious was DeAtley's involvement in the shadowy organization. When I interviewed him, I asked him who dreamed up Northwest Research. He answered, "It might have been me." He implied in the interview that he had formed the company after October 20, 1967. If DeAtley, not Patterson, had formed the company three years earlier, had DeAtley, who told me he had no interest or belief in Bigfoot, supported Patterson *far earlier* in the Bigfoot game?

Regardless, Northwest Research Association failed to pay Yakima Adjustment Service, so on August 7, 1969, the collection agency went after Patterson and Northwest Research Association again. Five days later, a Writ of Garnishment was served on the account of Northwest Research Association in the National Bank of Washington where the organization had a balance of $468.04. The bank agreed to withhold $199.45, enough to pay Yakima Adjustment Service and itself for answering the writ. On September 2, 1969, Yakima Adjustment Service's attorney received a check in the amount of $167.67. Eulah M. Miller, the company president, filed a "satisfaction of judgment against garnishee defendant" on September 4, 1969.

On October 9, 1969, two months before Patterson's grand larceny case was dismissed, and a month after the garnishment, Eulah M. Miller swore to the truth of another complaint against Patterson (Case No. 52961, Yakima Superior Court). The complaint listed twenty-one causes of action against Patterson for unpaid bills owing to a number of Yakima businesses. The unpaid bills were as follows:

- $3.65, Tufts Drug Company, transaction on October 22, 1966—"none of which has been paid though payment thereof has often been demanded"
- $65, Safeway Stores, Inc., the last transaction on or about March 1, 1965 —"paid by check, which returned no account"
- $493.41, Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, last transaction on or about October 18, 1966
- $47.50, St. Elizabeth Hospital, March 26, 1964
- $72, St. Elizabeth Hospital, "furnished and rendered certain services to and for the defendants"
- $7, Dr. Phillip Roth
- $55.46, Family Record Plan
- $9, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital
- $15, Dr. J. L. Greenwell
- $3, Sullivans Cleaners
- $7.43, Physicians Anesthesia Service
- $87.74, Quick Print
- $103.75, St. Elizabeth Hospital, March 30, 1965—the Pattersons had signed a promissory note—"demand for payment of said note has been made upon the defendants and payment refused"

- $12, Medical Center Laboratory
- $30, Southgate Super Duper, July 24, 1964—"paid by check, which returned no account"
- $3, Kurbitz Pharmacy
- $15, Gerritsen's Broadmead Market
- $21.50, Dr. Broadman, M.D.
- $27.03, Valley Marine
- $4, Wiley City Garage
- $77.29, Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company

Here was evidence that Patterson was engaged in check fraud—or, at best, he was terribly sloppy in how he handled his financial affairs. In some cases he was writing checks on an empty bank account; in other cases he wasn't paying his bills. He either refused to pay them or he couldn't or he wouldn't. Either way, he had no qualms, it seemed, in "buying" services from businesses and then not paying for them. The number of unpaid bills formed a clear, systematic pattern.

Patterson's reaction to the legal system regarding his irresponsibility tells an interesting story about his character. Miller sought judgment in Yakima Superior Court to force him to pay the bills. They totaled $1,526.23. The complaint was filed on January 6, 1970, when Patterson was in default of paying. Judge Carl L. Loy ordered judgment against him. More than nine months passed, and on October 26, 1970, because Patterson had paid nothing, a writ of execution ordered the Yakima County sheriff "to levy upon, seize and take both the separate and community personal property of said defendants . . . sufficient to satisfy the amount of said sum." The writ described the Pattersons' car: a 1965, two-door, hardtop Pontiac Cataline. The sheriff's department served the writ on the Pattersons on October 29, 1970. At the same time, the sheriff made notice that he would auction the Pattersons' car in the parking lot of the Larson Building on November 12, 1970, at 10:00 A.M. to satisfy the judgment. On November 2, 1970, Yakima Adjustment Service asked John H. Thompson, the Yakima County sheriff, to release the Pattersons' car "as satisfactory arrangements have been made."

This wasn't the first time Patterson had been sued. On May 26, 1967, thirteen days after he rented the sixteen-millimeter camera from Sheppard's Camera Shop, Patterson had signed the contract with the Radfords for the $700 loan. After repeatedly requesting payment from Patterson, who never paid anything, Vilma Radford filed a lawsuit against him on April 1, 1968.

Nine months passed. On January 7, 1969, Patterson signed a promissory note to pay Radford's attorney with Palmer, Willis & McArdle $700 with 7 percent annual interest by June 1, 1969. The promissory note was a compromise settlement of the Radfords' legal action filed earlier. Patterson had given the Radfords' attorney $400; now the remainder of the settlement was due. The Radfords promised to drop their action should Patterson fulfill the agreement.

When he didn't pay, J. W. McArdle filed a lawsuit against the Pattersons on December 4, 1969, which asked for a judgment against them for $999.99, with 12 percent annual interest. The notice of the lawsuit instructed Patterson and his wife to appear in person or by attorney within twenty days at the County Courthouse to "admit or deny" the claim. When they failed to show, on January 6, 1970, the Court "ordered, adjudged and decreed" that the Pattersons pay Radford's attorney $999.99, plus interest.

On May 22, 1970, the county clerk notified McArdle and the Pattersons' attorney that the case would be dismissed unless the attorneys showed good cause to continue the case. Because McArdle had not pursued the Pattersons' during the past year, by law the court was forced to dismiss the case on June 29, 1970. Radford had received nothing for her troubles (apparently McArdle kept the $400 as his attorney's fee).

Radford wasn't the only one to lose money to Patterson. Soon after Patterson's historic filming of Bigfoot, Bob Gimlin was cut off from Bigfoot Enterprises. He had become a Bigfoot Enterprises business associate with DeAtley and Patterson when the partnership was formed in Los Angeles on November 1, 1967, soon after the filming. Each of the Bigfoot Enterprises associates was granted a one-third, undivided interest in the Bigfoot film and related material.

Marge Davenport of the *Oregon Journal* reported that Gimlin said that he was "eased out" of Bigfoot Enterprises during 1968 when negotiations to sell the film began. Davenport also reported that "Gimlin says he never has gotten any pay for its [the film's] use."[1] In 1974, Gimlin and his wife Judy retained Yakima attorney David Crossland to initiate a lawsuit against DeAtley, Iva DeAtley (DeAtley's wife), and the Estate of Roger Patterson and Patricia Patterson. To defend themselves, the DeAtleys and Patterson secured the services of Randall Marquis, a Yakima attorney.

Before Gimlin started his lawsuit, Dahinden saw an opportunity, and he cozied up to Gimlin. To get the full story, I phoned Dahinden.

"Right after Patterson shot his footage, Gimlin had a falling out with and DeAtley and Patterson. Why?"

"Two promote the film, the other sits at home and doesn't move," Dahinden growled into the receiver.

I had picked up otherwise from my research. "Gimlin didn't want to be associated with them. He decided he was being taken advantage of."

"Yeah," he admitted in a low tone. "He didn't get his one-t'ird share."

"Gimlin took them to court. Why did you come into the picture?"

"Because I'm smart, that's vhy!" he gloated.

"Were you circling like a vulture looking for the carrion?" I challenged.

"No."

"You know what I'm saying?"

"No, I'm not. That's just like saying, 'Hey! The gold prices are two hundred and fifty dollars an ounce. I'm gonna buy it!'" he sneered.

Seemed to me Dahinden was saying, When Bigfoot goes up in value, buy Bigfoot films.

"So you were motivated by money?"

"No."

"Well, why did you get involved in Gimlin's lawsuit? Altruism?"

"No. I, uh, who knows? I sometimes—over the years, without t'inking—I don't know how to explain it, like traveling through the fog."

If not money, then *what*?

Dahinden went on to tell how he first met Gimlin in Vancouver, Canada, a week after Patterson and Gimlin came back from Bluff Creek. DeAtley, Patterson, and Gimlin were showing the film to professors at the University of British Columbia.

"I said, 'Hello' to Gimlin. Then in '69 I started to investigate the film, and over the years I talked to Gimlin over and over. And every time I talked to him he vas bitching and complaining about Patterson and DeAtley. He didn't even have a copy of the [Bigfoot Enterprises] contract. I said, 'Phone or write Walter Hurst down there and ask him for a copy of the contract.' He never did."

After Patterson died in 1972, Gimlin told Dahinden that he approached Patty Patterson at Roger's funeral and told her he owned one third and that he wanted her to settle up. But neither of them did anything. Then, in 1973 Dahinden published his book *Sasquatch*. The publisher wanted Dahinden and a sasquatch witness to appear at a news conference in Toronto to promote the book, so Dahinden invited Gimlin along. They flew from Vancouver to Toronto and stayed in a fancy hotel, all expenses paid. During the flight to and from Toronto, Dahinden asked Gimlin if he was going to take legal action against Patterson's estate.

"He said, 'Yeah, vell,' and I said, 'You've got rights.' So ve made a deal. In return for fighting his fight, he gave me 50 percent of his one-t'ird share in the film. I paid his lawyer fees. I went to L.A., talked to Walter Hurst, picked up all the papers, vent here, vent there, did this, did dat, because Gimlin had nothing. I paid for all the hassle." Dahinden estimated that he spent $10,000 on Gimlin's lawsuit, which lasted two years.

Dahinden's efforts paid off when Gimlin finally won, on February 6, 1976, his one-third interest in Patterson's film. Judge Bruce P. Hanson presented the good news in Yakima Superior Court. Hanson concluded that Patterson and Gimlin had been "close friends" prior to October 1967 and that Gimlin's camping equipment, horses, and tracking expertise had been essential and an integral part of "each and every expedition" that the men took. The Bluff Creek footage "was transported to Yakima County, Washington and developed," stated Hanson. In addition, "Albert E. DeAtley Jr., was associated with Roger Patterson and Robert Gimlin for purposes of promoting, publicizing and otherwise commercially exploiting the Patterson film footage. Numerous trips throughout the country were undertaken by the three parties for purposes of authentication and promotion." After the three men consulted with Walter E. Hurst, attorney at law, in Beverly Hills to create a "viable business entity" in the form of a joint venture, a certificate of the business name was published in the Los Angeles *Daily Journal* to allow the business association to use the name "Bigfoot Enterprises."

A key finding, the judge said, was the actions of DeAtley and Patterson. They commercially used and showed the film footage and sold and leased certain property rights, "but without just compensation to Robert E. Gimlin, even though Roger Patterson acknowledged on several occasions to third parties that Robert E. Gimlin was a business partner and had an ownership interest in the film footage and its related material."

On August 5, 1970 (eighteen months before Patterson died), DeAtley transferred, in writing, all his rights to Patterson. Upon Patterson's death, Patricia Patterson had a vested two-thirds interest in the business association, the Bigfoot film, and related material.

Hanson further found that DeAtley, Patterson, and Patricia Patterson "have or had a duty to account to Robert E. Gimlin for past income profits from the commercial exploitation of the film and/or the value received from sale, lease or other disposition of the film footage and its related material." The judge concluded that Gimlin "always retained an undivided one-third property right interest in the association and particularly the 'Bigfoot film' and related material."

Hanson ordered that Gimlin be awarded his undivided one-third interest, "both past and present," in all material connected with Bigfoot Enterprises. Patricia Patterson would retain an undivided two-thirds interest. Ownership interest in the Bigfoot footage was divided, with Gimlin owning 51 percent and Patricia Patterson owning 49 percent. Gimlin's ownership included past, present, and future rights in the footage. However, DeAtley and Patricia Patterson were released from accounting to Gimlin as to the business income or assets of the Bigfoot material.

What's more, Gimlin was awarded 100 percent of all past, present, and future publication rights of the Bigfoot material. This included selected movie film frames, still photos, and other Bigfoot items that he could sell for publication or rent to print media.

Patricia Patterson was awarded all television rights related to the footage, including the rights reserved under a licensing agreement that Roger Patterson signed with the film distribution company American National Enterprises, Inc. (ANE) on August 5, 1970. Gimlin retained a number of other rights, such as the right of first refusal of offers for the purchase or rental of the television rights, the right to make a reasonable offer of purchase of the television rights, and the right to review all films "now in the defendant's possession, particularly those films taken during the calendar year 1967."

If any of the "films" had been sold after the date of Patterson's death, Patricia Patterson had to give Gimlin the addresses of the purchasers. Patty Patterson was also ordered to "immediately transmit" all reasonable offers she received to Gimlin or his attorney. Roger Patterson had also signed a number of contracts with film companies, and Hanson ordered Patricia Patterson to give to Gimlin copies of all contracts and correspondence with the companies, which included seven documents on file with the Superior Court involving third parties who claimed a right to the footage.

Gimlin had received the lion's share of rights in the Bigfoot footage and related materials. He not only owned 51 percent interest in the Bigfoot footage, but he owned 100 percent of the publication rights. However, Gimlin had been left out of the 1968 negotiations concerning the sale of Patterson's Bigfoot footage to ANE. Dahinden, now owning *half of Gimlin's right* to the footage, recognized this, and he now had bigger game in his sights. He knew that Patterson had signed rights to the footage to anyone he damn well pleased whenever he needed to exploit the film for a quick buck. Dahinden himself had been one of many purchasers of rights to the footage; early in 1968 he and John Green had bought a master copy and two duplicate copies of the footage from DeAtley and were given the right to show the film in lecture halls in Canada. Dahinden believed that film companies had infringed on his rights. If he could somehow convince the courts that film companies had infringed on his and Gimlin's rights, of which he now owned half, then he could reap massive profits from those companies. Gimlin's attorney, Crossland, after analyzing the situation, informed Dahinden that Patterson's sale of the film to ANE "provided no warranty of title." Dahinden made preparations for a second lawsuit. For this lawsuit, he and Gimlin signed a contract where each agreed to share the legal expenses, fifty-fifty.

And so with copies of Roger Patterson's contracts and correspondence with various publishers and film companies in hand, Dahinden got started. Having tracked Patterson's actions for years, he was quite aware of the other players in the Patterson saga. One was Pat Mason, who had promoted Patterson's footage soon after it was shot.

Letters from Dahinden to Mason reveal that some time in 1968, probably in the spring after *Argosy* publicized Patterson's film, Patterson was discussing with ANE the concept of establishing either a limited partnership or a company called "Big Foot Ventures." Mason was to be a partner. Articles of a Limited Partnership and Articles of Incorporation for the purported Nevada corporation were drawn up, but never filed. The bylaws of Big Foot Ventures were executed by Russell E. Neihart, the founder of ANE, who would supposedly function as the secretary. Most interesting. Here, it seemed, Patterson was working behind the backs of DeAtley and Gimlin, his partners in the newly formed Bigfoot Enterprises, trying to start *another company* without consulting them. And, it appeared, Patterson would even be the president of the newly conceived Big Foot Ventures.

Armed with this information about Patterson's subterfuge, Dahinden convinced Mason and Gimlin to band together with him to sue ANE. In early March 1976, about a month after Gimlin settled with DeAtley and Patricia Patterson, the trio retained the services of John M. Biggs, an attorney Mason knew in Eugene, Oregon.

Biggs advised that, unfortunately, the Big Foot Ventures papers weren't effective legal documents. Nonetheless, he wanted to know more about ANE, which bought rights to Patterson's footage in 1970, and especially members of the Olson family who owned ANE, Frank Olson and his two sons, Ron and Dean.

Dahinden informed Biggs that in addition to owning ANE, the Olsons owned two Oregon film companies, North American Film Enterprise, Inc., and North American Productions of Oregon, Ltd. While Biggs worked with Dahinden to devise a case against ANE and the Olsons, the Olsons were embroiled in their own lawsuit against Sun Classic Pictures, Inc., a Delaware film company doing business in California. ANE asserted that Sun Classic was illegally using a copy of Patterson's footage, to which ANE had the exclusive license. In 1975 Sun Classic had used the footage in a movie entitled *Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster*. Ron Olson had used Patterson's footage in a movie he himself had made in 1975 called *Sasquatch: The Legend of Bigfoot*.

ANE banded with the Olsons' two Oregon film companies to sue Sun Classic for $100,000 in damages. On November 7, 1976, Dahinden wrote to Mason and reported that ANE had settled with Sun Classic and with another company, Wolper Productions, who had also used the Bigfoot footage illegally.

Although Big Foot Ventures never became an actual company, Dahinden was convinced that Mason had a rightful one-third interest in Patterson's footage—the other two thirds were evenly divided between Patterson and Neihart. Dahinden reported to Mason that ANE had responded to Biggs, "and they told us to shove off and take us to court for 1/3, etc., etc., a real smart bunch of assholes."

This didn't sit too well with Dahinden. He had been tracking and hounding ANE for many months. In fact, he had made the long trek from his home in Richmond, Canada, to Salt Lake City to monitor ANE's lawsuit against Sun Classic. "Ronny Boy Olson will get a hell of a shock in the end," snickered Dahinden. "I came away from Salt Lake City with a whole bunch of papers—xerox of testimonies, etc. etc."

From his home, Dahinden told Mason in a letter that ANE had sued Sun Classic and Wolper for $900,000. Dahinden was salivating. "Gimlin and I would like you to join us in a joint court action against American National/Olson and his company for 66% of all money made on the Bigfoot film . . . [and] either sue ANE/Olson for 66% of all money they got from Wolper/Sun Classic, or sue Wolper/Sun Classic for our share." Mason, now out of the Bigfoot game, responded that he only wanted the $14,000 he had invested in Patterson.

Dahinden persisted and urged Mason to look for a "partnership paper," if he had signed one with Patterson and DeAtley, "any letters, copies of contracts, etc., etc. Take everything you have from them and put it in a box, and we can look it over together. Will keep you informed."

But Mason just wasn't interested.

On December 20, 1976, an impatient Dahinden wrote Mason again. He was convinced that he, Gimlin, and Mason should move against ANE and the Olsons "now."

"I have a proposition to make to you," Dahinden wrote. "It seems that you have not much time to spend on this—but I want to do something about it. I like to propose a deal to you like I have with Gimlin. I will get this to court—in return I will get 50% of what a court decides is your share in the Bigfoot film—if any. I will deal with the attorney and get all necessary papers, etc., etc., and push anything which needs pushing to get this matter going. I also will get 50% of all net—if any—of all money recovered from ANE/Olson and his film companies."

Dahinden also knew that, if he could eliminate any competition who felt they owned rights to the film, he could end up as the *sole owner*.

"Also," Dahinden continued, "I want to be the controlling party in any dealings in the future re: the Bigfoot film. This for the simple reason that I am involved in the Bigfoot search/research and know what is going on. I will also deal with Mrs. Patterson and her attorney in Yakima re: the remaining TV rights. This is also to tell you that Wolper in L.A. is making another deal with Mrs. Patterson re: selling to Wolper TV rights for $15,000. So you can see that we have to move fast, or you will lose on that, too."

Dahinden asked Mason to give him power of attorney to act on Mason's behalf and to share fifty-fifty on any awards or settlements. Mason, the burden of dealing with lawsuits lifted off his shoulders, agreed to Dahinden's terms.

By this time, Dahinden had engaged the services of Yakima attorney Alan Campbell. On January 17, 1977, Campbell sent a letter to the attorney of Wolper Productions. NBC was about to air Wolper's production, *Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster*, which incorporated Patterson's footage. Campbell threatened Wolper with a lawsuit, claiming that Mason and Gimlin retained ownership interest in the footage.

Concurrently, Campbell wasn't optimistic about the Big Foot Ventures contracts. The nature and extent of Mason's ownership interest in the limited partnership wasn't even defined. In fact, as far as Campbell could tell, Mason had only an 8.75 percent interest. And unfortunately, the partnership had never materialized.

Undaunted, Dahinden tried to prop up Mason's crumbling position in Bigfoot Ventures. On January 24, 1977, he wrote Patricia Patterson's attorney Randall Marquis and enclosed a copy of the Big Foot Ventures contracts. He minced no words. Mason, he said bluntly, had been a partner with Patterson and DeAtley, and Mason had a share in all assets of the footage. Dahinden demanded that Patricia Patterson stop selling further rights in the footage "without our permission. . . . Further, we request/demand that you do not sell any further TV rights to the Wolper Organization. I refer here to the $15,000 deal. Mr. Mason feels that his rights are worth at least double or more—for a limited time. . . . If Mrs. Patterson and you make a deal with Wolper without our permission, we will get a court order to revoke this contract. Further, Mr. Mason requests payment for all past income from the Bigfoot film and other assets and a full accounting of all money received."

Dahinden added that ANE was part of Big Foot Ventures, as were the Olsons. Mason had never received any money or benefit from any of them and had never relinquished his rights to Patterson's film to them. In fact, "Mr. Mason was/is the owner of rights to the Bigfoot film and all other assets relating to Bigfoot before the formation of the Bigfoot Ventures contract."

Dahinden blustered that if Patricia Patterson sold any more TV or film rights, "we will take the strongest court action for a share of past income and a damage action for $100,000. . . . In closing, let me be blunt and to the point—all this selling of other people's property rights has gone far enough."

Dahinden wrote to Mason the same day. He wasn't about to give up, he boasted, but he admitted that the letter to Marquis "may be a bit strong." He urged Mason to search for "anything at all" that might buttress Mason's case. Maybe Mason had sent something to attorney Biggs in Eugene. Dahinden also volunteered to talk to someone who knew about Mason's efforts on the behalf of Northwest Research Association, "sending out folders/books, etc., etc., etc."

Dahinden then shot off another letter to Wolper. In it he declared that Mason was the "sole owner" of rights to the footage and all other assets relating to it that preceded the Big Foot Ventures contract. Wolper was buying rights to the footage without Mason's or Gimlin's permission. "[W]e will take court action against Wolper and sue for $100,000."

Dahinden also wrote ANE's attorney, stating that ANE knew that Mason was an owner of the footage, "a fact which of course was/is well known to American National/Olson/Patterson and her attorney." Gimlin also owned rights in the film, Dahinden said, and he went on to demand a full accounting and payment of a percentage of money ANE made off the footage and insisted that ANE stop selling rights to the footage to other parties.

"All of this has gone far enough," Dahinden fumed. "From now on things will be done honest and business like or we will launch the biggest damn court action ANE ever saw." And he threatened to invoke a court action to revoke ANE's settlement with Wolper/Sun Classic since ANE had "less than 50% ownership in the Bigfoot film."

Perhaps Dahinden never had an overarching legal strategy for his lawsuits, but he began contriving a plan to acquire all the rights to Patterson's film two-and-a-half years after Patterson died. On July 8 and November 15, 1974, soon after he took the helm of Gimlin's lawsuits against DeAtley and Patty Patterson, he presented a copy of the Radford contract to attorney Marquis and demanded the 5 percent of the film proceeds Patterson had promised the Radfords in May 1967.

On November 16, 1974, Dahinden persuaded Vilma Radford to sign over *her rights* to the film to him for $100. Under the contract, Dahinden agreed to pay Radford $900 once he successfully received money from a lawsuit he planned to launch against the Patterson estate.

A year passed, and on July 7, 1975, Dahinden and Gimlin paid Patty Patterson a visit. Dahinden requested that she honor the Radford contract. He asked for 5 percent gross of all money from the film within twenty days. Marquis responded in writing: "Mrs. Patterson does not recognize your claims."

Dahinden shot back on September 19, 1975. He said that Patty Patterson had had three years to settle with Vilma Radford, "so we can only assume that she has NO intention to make payments. Even doe [*sic*] the Patterson's [*sic*] made $50,000 to $60,000 on the Bigfoot film." He also demanded that Patterson fulfill the promissory note of January 7, 1969, the $999 owed the Radfords.

The next day he wrote Vilma Radford: "I must say that I am getting good and damm [*sic*] tired of this bunch, one wunders [*sic*] what kind of people they are." Dahinden asked Radford to find out from Jack Oliphant *if he had a contract* with Patterson, DeAtley, and Gimlin.

Throughout 1976, Dahinden's and Patterson's attorneys wrangled over a settlement. Dahinden wanted Patty's 49 percent interest in the film. She responded that she was willing to sell all her rights to Dahinden for $50,000. Dahinden rejected the $50,000 offer, and on November 6, 1976, he wrote to her again. He wanted 5 percent of all money made off the Bigfoot film, which included ANE and all the other film companies. "I would say that this involves about $200,000 payment for the Radford contract."

Without a response from Patterson that Dahinden could accept, on January 25, 1977, Campbell filed a cause of action against the Estate of Roger C. Patterson and Patricia Patterson (Case No. 77-2-00243-0, Yakima Superior Court).

The cause claimed Dahinden was "the lawful holder" of the Radford/Patterson contract and demanded from Patterson an accounting of all proceeds from the Bigfoot film she received since 1971, plus 5 percent off all moneys she had received since 1971. The complaint included an injunction to prevent her from selling the film until the action was settled. Almost a year later, on August 23, 1978, Dahinden dropped his suit "for legal reasons," as he told Vilma Radford in a letter dated February 23, 1979.

Undeterred, on January 24, 1978, Dahinden decided to launch the "biggest damn court action" he had yet cooked up. He went after Patricia Patterson and ANE (Case No. 78-2-00145-3). The court action exposed a web of contracts between Roger Patterson and/or his wife and movie companies so entangled that it would take a volume in itself to unravel. In one agreement, for example, on March 28, 1970, Roger Patterson granted M. J. Marchant and Edward McLoughlin of Arctic Safari Productions, a Canadian film company, an exclusive franchise to show the Bigfoot footage in Canada for fifty years. In another, Patricia Patterson granted ANE an exclusive, five-year license to use copies of the footage in Canada in conjunction with ANE's development and promotion of wildlife films. In turn, ANE authorized and permitted other film companies to incorporate the footage into films that were shown in theaters and auditoriums. The companies included Dahinden's enemies: Sun Classic Pictures, Inc., Sun Classic Productions, Inc., and Wolper Organization, Inc. Roger Patterson even signed a second agreement with Marchant and McLoughlin three weeks before his death, allowing the film producers to show the footage in Canada on a perpetual basis.

As it turns out, Roger Patterson had also sold a master copy, plus two prints of his footage, to Dahinden and Green in 1968, and in one of his agreements with a film company, Patterson made clear he wanted to renege on his contract with Dahinden and Green: "It shall be the responsibility of first party to obtain possession of the said master copy and the two prints. . . . No showings of such film shall be made by anyone except second party. . . . It is the sole responsibility of first party to prevent any showing of this film by Dahinden and Green or by anyone else during the period of second party rights under this contract."

In his lawsuit, Dahinden alleged that Patricia Patterson and ANE knew of her husband's agreement with Marchant and McLoughlin, and that ANE's use of the footage in Canada was "in contravention of rights owned by Marchant and McLoughlin." Cleverly, Dahinden had signed an agreement with Marchant and McLoughlin on March 27, 1977, *ten months* before filing his lawsuit, whereby he was assigned "all claims and rights of action which they [Marchant and McLoughlin] have against Mrs. Patricia Patterson and ANE, Inc." This move strengthened his position as an "owner" of rights to the footage.

Now, as plaintiff, Dahinden had three causes of action against Patricia Patterson. First, she had "knowingly and willfully" breached the terms and conditions of her husband's agreement of May 28, 1970, with Marchant and McLoughlin. Second, ANE was engaging in unfair competition against Marchant and McLoughlin. Third, Patricia Patterson had "unlawfully converted the property rights of McLoughlin and Marchant to her own use."

Dahinden demanded judgment against Patricia Patterson and ANE, seeking punitive damages to be determined at trial for "malicious, intentional and willful acts which have injured Marchant and McLoughlin [i.e., Dahinden]." Dahinden felt that ANE should pay for its unfair competition against Marchant and McLoughlin. In addition, Dahinden wanted ANE to deliver for impoundment all copies of the Bigfoot footage while the action was pending.

For four years, wranglings and threats boiled among the four parties—Dahinden, Patterson, ANE, and Marchant and McLoughlin. During the proceedings, Gimlin, tired of it all and financially strapped, gave up. On September 29, 1978, he sat down with Dahinden at the Sportsman Café in Yakima and affixed his name to an agreement of sale and transfer signing over to Dahinden "all right, title, and interest. . . . in that certain sixteen millimeter color-film strip of a 'Bigfoot' type creature." Dahinden also received the rights and property interest, copyright interests, and all claims, causes of action or other rights against third parties which were awarded to the Gimlins more than two-and-a-half years earlier by Judge Hanson on February 6, 1976. In short, Dahinden bought Gimlin out. The deal was closed with Dahinden paying Gimlin $10 "and other valuable consideration in hand." In return, Gimlin and his wife retained one copy of the film for their personal use and enjoyment, which they could show privately to groups less than ten people but for "no monetary or other compensation."

In 1979, the Dahinden lawsuit was sent to Federal Court. On March 26, 1982, the parties settled, their claims were dismissed with prejudice and without costs being awarded to any of the parties, and the case was formally ordered dismissed by Judge Justin L. Quackenbush of the United States District Court. After eight years and untold thousands of dollars, the battle over Roger Patterson's sixteen-millimeter, sixty-second, color Bigfoot film was over.

The settlement gave Dahinden controlling rights—51 percent of the film footage, 51 percent of the video cassette rights, and 100 percent of all 952 frames of the footage. Patty Patterson had 100 percent of all TV rights and 49 percent rights in the film footage. Dahinden had vanquished his foes, the film companies; he had bought out Gimlin, who himself had received nothing from Patterson; and Mason and Radford, promised part of the profits by Patterson, had nothing to show for their investment or efforts. Dahinden was on top of the heap. Dahinden, who had admitted to me that Patterson was dishonest and had once told a news reporter that Patterson was a crook, now had a ready money source. And, amazingly, he had never seen a Bigfoot!

I called Dahinden to chat about the money angle.

"Every time you talked to Gimlin," Dahinden groused, "he was out there someplace feeding his horses. You know, it just pissed you off! He just didn't grasp the business as business, and his *fucking* horses are his *fucking* horses. He just didn't get his priorities right. By turning everyt'ing over to me, and I pay him ten dollars, I let him off the hook. Gimlin valked away scot-free."

"There's certainly one thing we can say about the famous Patterson footage," I said, "and that it's a story about money, if nothing else."

"Ehhh." He chewed skeptically over my comment. "Looking back on it, I t'ink I vanted my finger on the film . . . so I could do things with the film without having to try to get permission, vhich I never vould have gotten. You try to deal with Pat Patterson, she's all business."

Well, I thought to myself, that may be true, but his letters to Mason and Radford belied a greater desire—he wanted to get his hands on *money*, and lots of it.

Dahinden said that he had a good relationship with Patty Patterson. But I found it odd, though, that it took him twenty-five years to meet her face to face a second time. In November 1999 he traveled to Yakima to stay a week and try to dig up information on the Man in the Suit. "I asked around here and there," Dahinden said. "Wasson had disappeared, down to Florida, got another job. So I vent out and saw Pat Patterson, one afternoon, then the next afternoon. Ve decided to leave that guy alone, you know. I was t'inking of going to the newspaper, and then I said, 'Aw, fuck it. Simply leave that asshole alone.' Leave sleeping dogs lay, you know."

I thanked him for his time.

* * *

"Yes?" I mumbled, bleary-eyed, a few weeks later, after dragging myself out of bed on a Sunday morning to answer the phone.

"My name's Doug Lemon. I saw your ad."

On a whim, I had placed an ad in the personals in the *Yakima Herald* asking if anyone knew anything about Patterson. Someone was actually responding.

The caller advised me to contact Robert Clem, the manager of the Yakima Airport. Because Clem was an entertainer in 1967, he could have been involved in the Patterson film, Lemon theorized. "Also, Harvey Anderson. He owned a camera shop. I was in his store when I was a teenager, and I remember overhearing him one day say he was involved in the film."

Lemon's comment pricked me awake, but after questioning him I wondered if Harvey Anderson, a shop owner, would involve himself in a hoax. However, it sounded as if Anderson was someone to interview since he was in the camera business. Wasn't it another camera shop owner, Harold Mattson, the manager of Sheppard's Camera Shop, who had rented Patterson the camera?

A few months later I took a break from my writing, and Pat and I took a trip to Yakima to look up Clem. But first we visited Les Johnson to re-interview him and to check for any discrepancies in his stories. I detected none. Johnson's wife, who sat some distance away from us, listening to the interview, spoke up: "You know, Roger's dying words were, 'It's getting dark, oh so very dark."

"Is that right? How do you know that?"

"Patty Patterson told me."

A feeling of sorrow pervaded the room. "That's sad," I said. "One would hope that when anyone dies, it would be a reference to hope and to light, not to dark."

Les said, "You know, a person you ought to talk to is Merle Warehime. He's a realtor. He used to run the Circle Inn Tavern. He told me not too long ago that the Bigfoot suit was in his tavern."

My heart thumped. "Would you repeat that!"

A bland expression on his face, he repeated his statement.

"Well, I guess we'll have to call him," I said.

We left the Johnsons and headed east on the North Fork toward the juncture of Ahtanum Road.

"Fantastic!" I glanced at Pat to my right as we rushed onto Ahtanum Road and raced toward Yakima to surprise Clem. "Now we have a lead on a Bigfoot suit!" We entered The Narrows and its tiers of brown rocks. On our right, rows of orchards stretched toward Ahtanum Ridge. As the rocks and trees flashed by, I thought out loud, "I wonder if there was more than one suit? Could Roger have made several suits? For example, I wonder if someone wore a suit to scare Pettijohn and Merritt? And a second suit was used at Bluff Creek?"

Pat shrugged.

Robert Clem's eyebrows raised when he opened his door and saw us standing on his doorstep. A large man with wide shoulders, a rotund girth, and a bushy mustache, Clem eyed us carefully. But after listening to the reason for our visit, he invited us into his living room.

We each took a chair. Sitting back, Clem listened to my questions, then answered. After moving to Yakima from the Aberdeen area in western Washington in 1966, he started working for KIMA TV. There, he wrote, directed, and produced commercials. It didn't take long for him to become aware of Jerry Merritt and Roger Patterson. On a freelance basis, Clem would occasionally visit Merritt's house to do voice-overs for commercials Merritt was producing for clients. Then, one day in October 1967, not long after Patterson had come back from Bluff Creek, someone in the KIMA studios shouted, "Come here and look at this!"

Clem crowded around a monitor with his fellow producers and reporters. Someone had brought in Patterson's footage, and the news crew was studying it.

"What was your impression of it?" I asked.

"Just as phony as could be," Clem said in a mellow announcer's voice. "I didn't believe it. I don't believe anyone in the room believed it. They said, 'We're going to run it, and just put a disclaimer with it,' because it was exciting to look at." The station ran the footage a few times, and then the clamor over the film died down.

"Did you meet Patterson around that time?"

"I think I might have met him at KIMA in one of the hallways. I don't think it was the same day we watched the film. He was small, wiry, looked like a guy who rode a horse a lot."

Clem remembered news stories issuing from the local media in the general time frame—Bigfoot tracks at Cowiche and others in the Ahtanum Valley out toward Tampico. "What I remember," he chuckled, "was thinking, Somebody's out there with big shoes on."

Caught up in the spirit of the times, Clem and a KIMA reporter decided to have some fun. "At KIMA there was a long hall with two studios each at the end of the hall. I opened the door to the studio and turned the mikes up as high as they go, and Tom Hunt and I went up all the way to the other end of the hall, and we stood there and screamed, both of us, as loud as we could. Then I walked back and turned off the tape. Ha! That became the only genuine audio of a sasquatch in the world! We thought there ought to be audio to go with Patterson's film."

He twiddled his mustache between his thumb and forefinger. "There's nothing wrong with a good con unless it involves people getting hurt or money. Why, I told City Hall once that I'd have to shut the airport down because of the seagull migration—too many sea gulls going through the air space. They bought it!" He laughed heartily.

Clem suggested that I call Jim Nolan, a former KIMA employee living in Gig Harbor, Washington, to see what he remembered.

Once back in the car, Pat opened our tattered Yakima phone book in her lap and looked up Harold Mattson, the former manager of Sheppard's Camera Shop. Within ten minutes, we pulled onto the gravel driveway of a house in a nondescript neighborhood. The woman who answered my knock and stepped onto the front porch was Mattson's wife. "Harold died in December of 1999," she said mournfully.

I was crestfallen. Pat and I stood with her on the porch for thirty minutes and listened as she spun loving memories of her husband. At an appropriate moment I brought up the fact of Patterson's arrest for stealing the sixteen-millimeter camera.

"Oh, I remember people calling here over the years asking Harold details about that," she said. Probably the Bigfooters, I concluded. She, herself, had nothing to offer regarding the incident.

Since the time had come for us to leave, we broke free from her memories of her husband, thanked her, and drove toward home. "They're going to all start dying," I said gloomily to Pat. "You know, Merritt has had several heart attacks and surgeries. We really need to do a follow-up with him and ask him some tough questions."

Back at the apartment, I phoned Jim Nolan of Gig Harbor. Nolan put himself on a speaker phone. His voice crackled distantly. "I was the program director at KIMA," he said. "I worked there from 1953 until 1981, when I retired. In 1967 KIMA was the only TV station in Yakima." The speaker phone warbled as he laughed. "I remember Roger Patterson. He was kind of flaky, I always thought." He recalled that Patterson frequently visited KIMA to seek publicity for his projects.

"How many times did he visit?"

"Well, let's see . . . probably a dozen times or more, promoting whatever his venture was. He used to come to the station with various people on various projects of his. I remember he had a stagecoach and some goats."

"How did he act when he came in and talked about his projects?"

"Oh, animated. And persistent. *And persistent.*"

"Did you consider him a pest?"

He erupted in laughter, and the speaker phone quivered hoarsely in rhythm with his laughs. "Don't put words in my mouth, but from my point of view . . . after a while, yes. I don't mean he was a pest, but, you know, those people who constantly come out with something, pretty soon you say, 'Maybe next time, Charlie!'"

"Did he strike you as a salesman?"

"Yes. I never did think he was a crook. But when it got to Bigfoot, I began to wonder. I always thought he was fake-y."

"Because of the Bigfoot thing?"

"Yeah, and even before. I don't know, I distrust people who come tryin' to promote things that sound a little. . . ." His voice faded.

"A little questionable?" I filled in.

"Yeah, questionable. Yes."

"Do you remember your station airing the Bigfoot footage?"

"Yes." The speaker phone hissed. "He brought it out [to the station], and he wanted to get it on the air, of course, for the publicity. And finally Tom Hunt took a good look at it, and we looked at it, then we put it on the air, as I recall, with the proviso that this was something that Patterson shot. We neither vouched for the shooting of it, nor the authenticity of whatever the creature was. It was a news thing we thought, so we put her on the air."

I told Nolan that Clem had remembered the media running stories between 1966 and 1967 regarding Bigfoot sightings in the Ahtanum Valley.

"Yes. There were Bigfoot sightings. I can remember one time when Tom Hunt went traipsing all over the Ahtanum Ridge and up and down because somebody had reported spotting 'im. He spent half a day or more out there with his camera trying to locate it. He never found it. And I never ran into anybody who actually had documented seein' such a creature."

Nolan remembered hearing stories of Bigfoot tracks. "No one could prove they were Bigfoot prints. And most of us—of course, we were all skeptics—believed that he probably made them himself."

"You lived in Yakima for years. Do you recall any Bigfoot reports in Yakima occurring before 1966, the year Patterson's book came out?"

"In the Yakima Valley? I can't remember much of anything specific before Roger."

We traded a few more standard observations of Patterson, and after getting his permission to quote him, I ended the interview and thanked him.

A few days later I called Merle Warehime and caught him before he left for work. After I explained my objective, to determine the truth of Patterson's story, Warehime laughed and immediately affirmed, "Bob Heironimus was the guy who wore the monkey suit." He laughed again. "It was always a joke. So when it started getting blown out as it did, it was funny. Nobody said anything about it because we didn't know if it would get Bob in trouble or not."

"Les Johnson told me the suit was in your tavern."

"Well. . . ." He lowered his voice. "I'm not going to comment on that."

"You're not going to comment?"

"No. You know, a lot of people seen it. I don't know who ended up with it. I don't know."

I could see that the suit was a sensitive subject, so I dropped it. But I suggested that Heironimus might have put on a costume to help Patterson convince the public of the existence of Bigfoot.

"I don't think it's that complicated. I think it's a bunch of guys. . . . It was kind of fun, go get drunk, put the suit on, and run out in front of somebody, you know." He giggled.

"Les said the suit was in your tavern."

He stopped giggling. "Well, I don't want to comment on that. I heard that some guys had it there one night. I understand that when I was gone for a couple of days, on a weekend, they had it in there. But I don't know. I wasn't there. It was like someone leaving their coat there. Who cares?"

"So you never saw the suit yourself?"

"In the back of the car, yeah."

I held the phone closer to my ear. "Oh, you did see it?"

"It seems to me that we were out—I don't even—God, it's been a long time ago. I believe we were out in the Ahtanum by that old church. We was sittin' there. We were about to go jeepin', and somebody had the thing. It was in a box there, you know. It was just in kind of a box in the back. I didn't pay much attention to it."

I threw out more questions. Although he believed that Heironimus had a big, blue Buick, he wasn't sure the car with the suit in it was a Buick. But he did remember the tenor of the times, the mid-1960s. People in Yakima were young, raising families, working hard, and at night some of them "drank like hell." The guys hung out and drank at the Circle Inn and the Idle Hour Tavern and the Town Pump. Everybody knew Patterson and Merritt were trying to make a movie. "That's what they wanted to do, you know. Who really cares? People laughed about it, joked about it, and we went to work."

"Are you convinced that Bob Heironimus was the guy who wore the Bigfoot suit?"

"Oh, yes." He tittered. "Yeah. That's the way Bob walks. All you have to do is watch him walk across the floor, and you know." Warehime became pensive, then he said he found it fantastic that so many people who didn't know each other kept the fact that Heironimus had worn the Bigfoot suit "at a low profile" for years and years. "No one, *no one* talked about it. Very few people. We didn't even talk about it amongst ourselves because everybody was kind of afraid that maybe, uh, it might get him in trouble. It was a joke, like me driving my car backwards up to the local bar one night, you know. That's all it was. Just a joke. Nobody ever mentioned this, nobody *ever*. We used to joke about it privately between the wife and I because everyone around here knows."

I thanked Warehime, checked my watch, and rushed to work. For the next four months I worked on the book until I had caught up on all the interviews.

"Well, there's no need to write anymore at this point," I proclaimed to Pat one evening as I sat down on the sofa. She looked up from her book. "We may never talk to Bob Heironimus," I said in depressed tones. "He's either lying or telling the truth. All I know is a lot of people have pegged him as the man who played Bigfoot in Patterson's film. If I never interview him, well, I'll include my taped interview of him in the book and call him a 'suspect.'"

"He's going to talk," Pat said and smiled. "I have a gut feeling. He *will* talk. And I need to talk to you about something."

"Uh-oh."

"We need to get a house. We can't live this way anymore."

She was right. Boxes of files, news clippings, magazines, and books were stacked five feet high everywhere. There was barely room to walk through the hallway. And the Patterson files were taking over our little study.

"OK. The Patterson book takes a back seat for now."

After a month of looking, we found a quarter-acre, undeveloped lot in a quiet cul-de-sac in Mill Creek, twenty miles north of Bellevue. We bought a spacious manufactured home and hired a general contractor. After the house was installed and the utilities hooked up, we loaded up a Ryder truck, and after several back-breaking trips, we moved in the first week of January 2001. "We did it," I said as I fell back onto the sofa exhausted. Boxes were strewn around the house, but at least we had room to stretch. More than two years had passed since I had begun the Patterson investigation.

On Thursday, January 11, 2001, I was at my office in Bellevue when my phone beeped. It was Pat. We began discussing some household projects we needed to address. Suddenly, she said, "Hold on, I'm getting a call. Funny. It's someone calling from Yakima."

"What?"

"I'll be right back." Click, on hold.

Three minutes later, the line came alive with Pat's voice. "You won't believe it!"

I knew that tone. Pat didn't use it unless she was going to say something really important. My head started swimming even before she spoke.

"It was a man named Glenn Cassidy. He said he wanted to talk to the Greg Long who's writing the Bigfoot book."

"Yes?" I gripped the phone and stared blankly at my computer screen. I hung onto her every word.

"He said he wanted to make sure that he had the right Greg Long. I told him that he did. Then he said he was a good friend of Bob Heironimus and that he had finally convinced Bob to tell his story. He said, 'We both know this has gone on long enough, and Bob was hesitant to call your husband, and he asked me to call him.' He gave me Bob's phone number."

"Wow!" I sat motionless, in shock. After a long while, I managed to say, "Tell me that again," and I rapidly took notes as Pat repeated the conversation. "Absolutely amazing" I said. Then, "I bet you he wants money for his story."

"Honey, he wants to *tell* his story."

"Well, we won't pay him for it. I'll tell you that right now." I tried to calm myself. "Cassidy. . . . Cassidy. Who's this Glenn Cassidy?" Then it dawned on me. An Ed Cassidy had printed an edition of Patterson's book. Maybe this Glenn Cassidy was related to him.

Pat and I talked for a while longer, and after hanging up, I forced myself to focus on work. That evening, I called Heironimus. He was pleasant sounding without a hint of defensiveness. "I understand you'd like to talk to me," I said. I calmly added, "I imagine it's about the book I'm writing."

"Yeah. When do you want to meet?"

I didn't want to seem too eager. "Well, my wife and I just moved into a new house. We've got to get some things organized first. How about the weekend of January 20–21?"

"OK."

"Why don't I call you the Friday before, just to make sure everything is on."

"No problem."

After I'd hung up, I stared at the ceiling, still in shock. "He wants to talk."

Pat was in her Lazy Boy recliner smiling and drinking in the vast space of the family room around her. "I told you he would finally talk," she turned to me.

"Well, I'll tell you right now. We don't have the money to buy his story. The Patterson story is all about money!"

On Friday, January 19, I called Heironimus again. His tone was the same, relaxed and informal, as if free from a heavy burden. “Meet us at the Jackson’s Sports Bar in Yakima at one o’clock tomorrow,” he said firmly. “My wife will be with me. And my publicity man.”

Publicity man?

“OK, Mr. Heironimus. I look forward to seeing you again.” I hung up.

Pat said, “Well?”

“Well, it looks like it’s going to happen. He’s going to have a ‘publicity man’ with him.”

“What does that mean?”

I shrugged. “I bet you the ‘publicity man’ is Glenn Cassidy. And it’s all about money.”

The next morning, the car packed with food, overnight bags, and cameras, Pat and I sped toward Yakima.

NOTE

1. Marge Davenport, “‘Bigfoot’ Film Settlement Starting More Court Fights,” *Portland Oregon Journal*, February 6, 1976.

20

THE MAN IN THE BIGFOOT SUIT

Sucker!

—Bob Heironimus

At 12:59 P.M., Pat and I walked into Jackson's Sports Bar in a mini-mall on South 48th Avenue in Yakima. The din of video games, pinball machines, ricocheting pool balls, and babble assaulted me. I grimaced. This was an impossible place for an interview.

Standing in the entryway, briefcase in hand, I looked for Heironimus. Suddenly, thirty feet away, a man stood up from behind a table. He had two companions with him. He waved at us. It had been more than two years, but the height, facial features, and stance of the man immediately registered: *Heironimus.*

Pat and I bobbed and wove a path around the crowded tables. As I drew near, Heironimus's face came into clear focus. He looked deadly serious. Simmering anger glimmered in his left brown eye. His right false eye bore the cloudy dullness I had recognized on his doorstep. "Have a seat," he said solemnly.

As Pat and I pulled out our chairs, Heironimus eased himself behind the table. Next to him was an attractive woman with brown hair and soft eyes.

"This is my wife Glenda," he said.

"Hello," she said with a thin smile.

We shook her hand, and I set the briefcase on the floor next to me. Heironimus eyed it suspiciously.

I introduced Pat to everyone.

Across from Glenda sat a middle-aged, boyish-looking man with gray hair and handsome features. He extended his hand. "I'm Glenn Cassidy."

I gave him my name and gripped his hand tightly. Cassidy, I thought. "Could you be the son of Ed Cassidy?"

He eyed me. "How did you know that?"

"Are you related to an Ed Cassidy who printed an edition of Roger Patterson's book?"

Cassidy's eyebrows arched in amazement. "Yes. Dad was a printer. I remember Patterson coming over to our house to play poker."

Awkward silence prevailed.

"Would you like a beer?" Heironimus finally said. A half-empty glass of beer sat in front of him.

"Just water," I answered.

I had put my senses on high alert, ready to absorb every nuance of the conversation, every subtle movement of the three strangers. For all I knew, this was a Roger Patterson-type meeting, planned only to benefit them, not me. I would let Heironimus and his companions take the lead.

A waitress appeared. We ordered water. After the waitress vanished, Heironimus hunched forward, put his hands on the table, and then stared straight into my eyes. He had young, fleshy features, soft ruddy cheeks, and a fleshy jowl. For a man nearly sixty, only a few wrinkles marked his face. His waist was pudgy, but his arms were muscular and taut. He cleared his throat. "I'm here to tell you," he said in a soft, country voice, "that I was the man in the Bigfoot suit."

An electrified chill raced down my spine. I sensed Pat's body flexing beside me. I had taken care to scrutinize Heironimus's face as the statement rolled from his lips. I felt he totally owned the words; they were a natural part of him. It was a wondrous moment. He had just confessed, and I was dumbfounded. Despite the forceful manner of his confession, I was suspicious. He could be lying. Finally, I found the words: "Well, that's what I've been hearing from people out in the Ahtanum Valley."

"The reason why they're telling you I wore the suit is that I *did*," he said with authority. He tightened his lips into a hard line and leaned back, finished for the moment.

Cassidy spoke up. "You know, you're writing a book. People have made money off of this thing. Bob never made any money."

I could see that Cassidy was beginning to negotiate for Heironimus, who was calmly listening, a hand wrapped around his glass.

"You're out to build a Bigfoot empire, aren't you?" said Cassidy, an accusatory edge to his voice.

"Empire?" I laughed.

The waitress slid glasses of glinting ice water in front of Pat and me. I took a sip, leaned forward, and nearly shouted to make myself heard over the bedlam. For ten minutes I described the challenges of getting a book published. First, you need an agent. Then the agent needs a publisher. Then, if you're lucky, the agent will sell the book. But even if the book is published, there's no guarantee anyone will buy it. And the royalties are small.

"Empire?" I scowled. "Very few writers make much money from books. Few writers can even make a living from writing." I had painted a pretty grim picture, but it was all true.

"Well," Heironimus exclaimed, his face flushed, "millions of people are interested in Bigfoot. Thousands and thousands of people all over the Northwest would buy it!"

"Bigfoot is a narrow subject," I cautioned. "I'm not even sure very many people would buy it. I'm taking a gamble."

"They claimed Patterson fell off his horse!" Heironimus burst forth, his good eye blazing. "I can tell you the horse he was on, and she was steady as a rock." He sneered. "He was shaking the camera up and down." He held an invisible camera and shook it up, down, and sideways.

My pulse skipped. Heironimus's story was slipping out. I held back.

"Hell, there's not much to the story," Heironimus said. "It's really short."

I turned to Cassidy. "Of course, one way to help sell the book is a news conference. Let's say I told reporters what I knew about Patterson, then Bob could tell his story. The publicity would stimulate lots of sales."

Cassidy said scornfully, "Bob will have his *own* news conference."

"Fine," I said and restrained my enthusiasm.

"Yep, the story's simple," said Heironimus. Then, suddenly he began telling the story. I gathered up every ounce of mental energy and burned everything I was hearing into my memory. I wondered, Had he planned to tell his story at this juncture, or was he just tired of keeping it inside for nearly thirty-four years? In five minutes, he was done.

My thoughts were spinning. Heironimus was right. The story was simple in its essentials, details, and the events that had happened before, during, and after the filming of the Bigfoot. It *was* a five-minute story. And, it rang true with a smooth working of inner parts bearing the stamp of thinking I had come to associate with Patterson—meticulous, analytical, careful, diligent, and sharply honed like a knife blade used to carve out a Bigfoot so well-crafted that it left no signs of its fabrication. In short, the simplicity of Patterson's scheme, the sequence of events in its execution, the clever way in which he planned it was the sort of thing that only Patterson could dream up. I had thought long and hard for two years about how Patterson could pull off the film hoax—if it were a hoax—and not once had I thought of the story Heironimus just told. It made complete sense.

Pat's curiosity was palpable. But I remained impassive. I looked at Heironimus. I said calmly, "Well, that's very interesting. It *is* simple. But to engage a reader, a lot of the details need to be expanded. I would have to interview you. It would take a lot of time."

"Bob has something that will prove he's telling the truth," Cassidy said.

"But I ain't telling anyone what it is right now," Bob piped up.

"No," nodded Cassidy. "But it's proof."

Naturally, I was intrigued. But I could see the two men weren't ready to divulge this "proof."

"Let me suggest this, Bob," I offered. "Pat and I will get a room at the Big Valley Motel on First Street. It's a quiet place to do an interview. Shall we meet there in, say, an hour?"

Heironimus considered, then he and Glenda looked at each other.

"Uh, OK," he said. He seemed relieved, but I detected signs of suspicion.

"Good-bye," said Cassidy, leaving.

"I'll give you our cell phone number," said Glenda.

Pat opened her appointment book, entered the number, and we all stood up. As I shook Heironimus's hand, he studied me coolly.

"Seems like a dream," I said, dazed, as Pat and I drove to the Big Valley Motel, Heironimus's story replaying in my mind.

"I think he's the Man in the Suit!" Pat said.

"Well, his story makes complete, logical sense. But he's going to have to answer each of my questions. And what about this so-called proof?"

We checked into a room at the Big Valley Motel. Outside it was in the mid-twenties with snow predicted. But inside it was stifling. I punched on the air conditioner. It rattled, so I moved two chairs and a wobbly table near the door. I placed my chair on the opposite side of the table. "Good. Now we'll be able to record his voice."

I slumped into my chair and wrote my questions on a pad. As time dragged, I squirmed. "It's been an hour. What if he doesn't come?"

"He will," Pat said confidently.

Anxious, I called them. "We're about on our way," said Heironimus.

"See you soon." I hung up. "Something's up."

At 5:10 P.M., I was at the window when a new, glittery, jade-colored car pulled into the parking lot. I recognized Heironimus and Glenda inside.

"They're coming up!" I hastily rechecked the position of the table and chairs.

Minutes later, I heard soft knocking. I opened the door.

"Welcome," I said.

The couple took a tentative step across the threshold, then paused. Apprehensive, they began checking their surroundings. I saw the words "National Rodeo Finals" emblazoned on Heironimus's billed cap. His jacket was unbuttoned, an on the left breast pocket of his fir-green shirt was a logo and the word "Alaska."

Pat waved from the bed. "Hello."

Glenda responded in a quiet, childlike voice.

They awaited my instructions.

"Here, I've set up chairs for you. Sorry it's so cramped, but we can't sit near the air conditioner. Too loud."

"Uh-huh."

"Come in, come in."

Once they were settled, I said, "I'm glad you finally made it." They did not respond.

Heironimus stared suspiciously at my recorder, its switch off, lying on the table.

"People have made a lot of money off that film," he said, peeved. "And I was the star of it. People are still making money off it. . . ."

"Just who is *this* Glenn Cassidy?" I asked.

"A public relations guy in Yakima. Some friends of mine suggested I ask him to help me get my story out."

I nodded; I wanted *the truth* from Heironimus, honestly, openly. If Heironimus was a liar, I believed I could prove it. And as far as him telling the truth, I had faith I could prove that, too. Either way, my book would tell a fascinating story of deception, which, with or without Heironimus, was at the heart of the Roger Patterson story. I had wanted Heironimus's story for two years, whatever it turned out to be. It was now or never.

Suddenly, Heironimus began revealing more of his story. I left the recorder and pen untouched. I wanted his trust. And I wanted the freedom to look at his face for any subtle signs of deception.

Heironimus was plain and simple, I could see. I suspected he liked the company of common folk, the smell of fresh air and the outdoors, rather than a closed room. His cap told me he liked horses, rodeos, cowboys, likely a beer with his buddies, unadorned things of life. His vocabulary and grammar were limited, although he spoke clearly. Bitterness flashed in his good eye when he talked of how Patterson had treated him, how he had regretted not having an attorney when dealing with Patterson. But Heironimus was young back then, he said, twenty-six, and it was all about making quick money. Supposed to be the easiest thousand dollars he'd ever make. But Patterson did him wrong. I had heard it before: disloyalty. It seemed to be a persistent theme in the ever-evolving Roger Patterson story.

As I observed and listened, I stole quick glances at Glenda. She was either glancing at Bob or looking at her lap, listening intently. I sensed some things he was relating were new to her; other parts she'd heard before. She appeared to be a loving companion. Her eyes told their own story—she had never doubted her husband. Scrutinizing both of them, I never saw Bob's or Glenda's eyes make direct contact. They seemed at home with each other. Nothing seemed rehearsed. I sensed no subterfuge. Both were mild mannered, simple, innocent people. To me, they were a normal, everyday couple. The husband had come to talk to a writer to get something off his chest, and hopefully, to be rewarded for it. Both were risking their reputations. When Heironimus finished talking, he had completely destroyed the notion that the Patterson film was of a real Bigfoot.

He winced. "Excuse me. Can I use your bathroom?"

"Sure."

When the bathroom door closed, Glenda said something to Pat, which I couldn't hear. Meanwhile, I peeked at my questions. I saw that Heironimus was answering many of them on his own. As new ones popped into my head, I scribbled them down. I would ask him the next day, should he return.

Back in his chair, Heironimus said, "Eighteen years ago at the Noel Corporation [pronounced "knoll"] where I work, people found out about me. Four hundred people work there. Little things slipped out. They told me I should sell my story."

"Noel?"

"Yeah. They make Pepsi products."

"Almost thirty-five years have gone by, Bob," I said. "*Thirty-five years*. You could have told your story years ago and made some money. Why have you waited this long to tell it?"

"It's pretty simple. I told them I wouldn't tell."

"You told Patterson you wouldn't tell?"

"Yeah. And I didn't. I kept my word." Bitterness from long ago resurfaced. "Two years ago I told Gimlin, 'It's time I made some money out of this thing. I'm blowing the whistle. I'm going to tell the truth.' He said, 'Well, don't mention my name.' Well, how could I not mention *his* name when he was there during the whole thing?" He was resentful. "I remember when he had done an interview for the BBC. It's where he rides through an orchard in the snow and dismounts. Well, he came up to me one day on the job. That's when he drove a long haul truck for Noel. He says, 'Since you haven't got a dime out of this, I feel bad. Here's a hundred dollars.' And he shoved it down in my shirt pocket. I said, 'Aw, I don't want the money. That's peanuts.' He said the BBC had paid him two hundred and fifty dollars. But I really didn't believe that. Maybe twenty-five hundred dollars."

"Did you keep the money?"

"Yeah. He wouldn't take no for an answer."

"So two years ago you told him you were going to tell your story?"

"I told him, 'I don't give a damn. I'm telling the truth. I'm tired after thirty-three years of getting *nothin'* out of this thing, and seeing this thing on television week after week, month after month. How many years? People are making a living off of this thing. People have made a lot of money off this movie, like Pat Patterson." He spluttered. "These Bigfoot people are making money off it. Well, I should be getting a little cut of that, see. I'm gettin' *nothin'*."

Glenda said to Pat, "Bob wants to get this off his chest."

I asked him, "Do you want to get this off your chest?"

"Yes I do."

Seething emotion gripped him, his eyes blinking rapidly.

"And Patterson promised you a thousand dollars, and you weren't paid?"

"Yep. I kept my word. It was my integrity. I promised I wouldn't say anything. Back then, you did things on a handshake."

"It was a gentlemen's agreement?"

"Yeah. I should have had a contract, a lawyer, everything."

I redirected him to his story, and he provided more details. I asked some questions designed to uncover contradictions. He was consistent and never tripped up.

Glenda touched his hand. "It's getting late."

"Wow," I said. "Almost seven o'clock." We'd been talking two hours; it had seemed only minutes. I pushed my stiff bones up. "Can you come back tomorrow morning?"

"What time?" Heironimus asked as the couple walked to the door.

"Eight o'clock?

"That's fine," Glenda said.

As Heironimus turned the door knob, I read the words "Wiley City Rodeo" on the back of his jacket. I escorted them to the stairs, shook Heironimus's hand, and said good-bye.

Back in the room, I collapsed on the bed. "I'm tired!"

"Well, what do you think?" Pat asked eagerly.

I collected my thoughts. "Well, when I asked him a question he couldn't answer, he simply said, 'I don't know that,' or 'I don't remember.' If he was foisting off a phony story, you'd think he'd have an answer for everything. But he didn't."

"Well. . . ." Pat fluffed up the pillows under her head, "I feel the same. When he said, 'I don't remember,' it was easy to say—because he just plain didn't remember."

I said, "He seems to be a laid-back sort of guy, not the type who'd be comfortable creating lies. He's not slick or slippery. He seems to be exactly what you see, a happily married blue-collar worker living in a little house out in Ahtanum. Apparently he's lived out there for years."

Bob Heironimus, the Man in the Suit, confessed to his role in Patterson's Bigfoot film to Greg Long on January 21, 2001. Photo by Pat Long.

"Well," Pat said, "they struck me as very low-key, like they're in tune with each other, like they've always been close. They're stable."

"I agree." I hooked my fingers together behind my head and silently revisited Heironimus's statements.

Pat broke the quiet. "You know, when Bob was in the bathroom, Glenda said something."

"Oh?"

"She said Bob had struggled for two years wanting to get his story off his chest. He was bitter and hurt by the fact that they didn't keep their promise. The more he thought about it, the more determined he was to just tell the story."

"And he is. Man, I'm starving!"

We bought fast food and brought it back to the room. As we devoured our burgers, we continued to analyze our impressions. After I taped my memory of Heironimus's story, we crawled under the covers. All night I slept fitfully, my mind grinding out more questions for the interview.

Right after finishing a bowl of cereal the next morning, I drew back the curtain and observed the Heironimuses' car gliding into the parking lot on a fresh blanket of snow that had fallen overnight. It was 7:55. "They're here, and right on time," I said.

Pat and I quickly repositioned the table and chairs. I heard light tapping on the door. This time the couple stepped into the room without hesitation. Heironimus was clasping a black cowboy hat. He removed his jacket to reveal a long-sleeve shirt comprised of alternating bands of bright, native American symbols. He wore shiny cowboy boots, a pressed pair of blue jeans, and a large leather belt sporting a polished belt buckle. His light-brown hair was neatly combed.

The couple sat down. Heironimus looked at me, patiently waiting.

"Well. . . ." I picked up my pen. "This is going to take awhile, but we have this room until eleven. Ready, Bob?"

He settled further into his chair, crossed a leg, clasped his knee with his hands, and cleared his throat. "Ready." Nervousness rippled through his voice.

I punched on the recorder. "Let's start at the beginning."

"OK."

I glanced at my pad of questions. "Bob, when did you first meet Roger Patterson?"

"When he came to my house on Ninetieth Avenue in 1955 to see my sister, Mary. I was standing outside the house, not the house we live in now, but my parents' house, which was dismantled as a result of a flood in January, 1974. I was a freshman in high school. He was driving a black convertible Cadillac. He wore a T-shirt."

I quickly calculated. "Patterson would have been twenty-one years old."

Heironimus shrugged. "I remember he had his arm on the door frame of the car. His arms looked muscular. He had pretty good arms for a little guy. I saw him later around town over the years, but I don't remember any conversations with him then or when he visited Mary."

I crossed out the question and laid the point of my pen on the next one. "When did you meet Bob Gimlin?"

"I first met Gimlin when he was a bartender at Bill's Tavern on Third or Fourth Street in downtown Yakima. I was mostly interested in horses then, and I started talking to Gimlin about them. He was living in Union Gap at the time. He rode, broke, and sold horses . . . mostly his own. I had a one-ton stock truck at the time, and I'd load up my horse and meet him someplace, and we'd ride up on the trails and in the mountains."

"And so one day, as you told me yesterday, you were riding with him up in the mountains. And again, what did Gimlin say?"

"It was in July or August of 1967. Gimlin said that Roger was going to make a film, and they needed someone to wear a suit. I'm not positive if he used the word 'Bigfoot' or not at the time. Gimlin said, 'He [Patterson] needs someone pretty good size to get in the suit.' I weighed probably one hundred and ninety pounds then. I was six foot tall and as strong as a bull, and I guess I was what they were looking for. And, uh, since I run around with Bob Gimlin, and Bob and I were pretty good pals, well, Gimlin suggested me. They needed someone they could trust, first of all. And they knew I was a pretty honest feller. If I said something, I meant it."

"Were you surprised? This isn't the kind of thing a person hears every day."

"Yeah, sort of," Heironimus answered. "But I kind of went along, you know, to see what they had to say."

"So when Gimlin asked if you would wear the suit, he was serious?"

"Oh, yeah. I knew he was serious."

"And so then you met Gimlin and Patterson at Patterson's house at Tampico?"

"I may have. I'm not positive. They explained to me they were going to sell the film, naturally, and make a fortune. They would give me a thousand dollars, and then as they made money [from movies], they'd divvy over money to me."

"And is that when they told you, 'Bob, make sure you keep your mouth shut about this. Don't tell anyone'?"

"Oh, yes, oh, yes. 'Don't reveal this to anybody. This is top secret. Don't say anything to anybody.'"

"Did you feel that you were going to do something illegal, or wrong or bad?" I asked.

"No. It had nothing to do with me," he said grimly. "Like I told you before, I could care less what they done with that film."

"Do you remember them saying they'd pawn the film off on the public and say it's real?"

"They told me more or less they were going to sell it to some movie outfit, whoever would buy it to make movies out of it."

I wondered if Heironimus, Patterson, and Gimlin had together dreamed up the idea of filming a Bigfoot. When I put that question to him, he answered quickly, "I never really talked to Roger. The first time I had sat down with him was at Tampico."

"Describe this meeting at Tampico."

Heironimus adjusted his weight in his chair. "Well, Patterson was excited, you know. He was kind of a hyper little guy, and he had big visions, you know. He wasn't trying to sell me on the thing."

"Because you had already agreed to wear the suit?"

He nodded affirmatively.

"It was to seal the deal. He wanted to make sure I would do it, and I wouldn't tell anybody, either then or after the film was made. I promised him [that I wouldn't]."

"You shook hands with Patterson? "

"That's how we done it. I believed in gentlemen's agreements, shaking hands. I wished to hell I would have had a little contract signed." He sighed.

"So, what happened next?"

"Shortly after that they had the suit done. They said I had to go up to the South Fork and try on the suit and make sure it fit, walk the way they wanted me to, practice a little bit."

"And so you drove out to Patterson's house on the South Fork?"

"Yeah."

"What were you thinking while driving to his house?"

"It didn't matter to me," he said coldly. "I was twenty-six years old. I didn't give a damn about anything."

"Was Gimlin there?"

"Roger and Bob were standing over by the shed in back of Roger's house. I parked and walked over to them. Roger went into the shed, and he brought out the suit. I think that's where he made the suit, in the shed."

Heironimus recalled that he might have walked into the shed with Patterson. Images of leather-making tools, glue, needles, and pieces of leather lying on a workbench in the shed stuck in his mind. "I know he was able to fix saddles," he said.

I was taken by surprise with his next statement.

"Patty Patterson was looking out a window when Roger brought the suit out."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"How did you know it was her?"

"I've known her all my life. I grew up with her. We went to school together. We were in the same classes together. We played together. I knew her sisters Beverly and Sandy and her brother Bruce."

"Then what happened next?"

"They helped me put the suit on."

I couldn't wait to hear Heironimus's answers to my next question. "Describe the suit for me."

"It was made of three parts. It had the legs. It had a corset or middle piece between the neck and waist. And it had a head."

"So it had three separate pieces?"

"Yeah. I sat down on a log and took my boots off and slipped my legs into the legs of the suit, which felt like they were hip boots or wading boots, you know, those long boots that go up to your waist. My feet slipped into the feet of the suit. I think the feet were made of old house slippers you used to see around, that looked like a big foot with toes on them. They had wrinkles on the bottom of them, you know."

"You put your legs inside big rubber boots that went to your waist?"

"Yeah. All I can say is it felt like rubber boots."

"He must have cut the 'feet' off the boots and attached the 'Bigfoot' feet to them," I speculated out loud.

Heironimus shrugged. "I don't know. They helped me stand up, and Roger and Bob slipped the torso part down over my head and shoulders. I raised my arms up. I kind of wiggled into it. I put my hands and arms into sleeves. It was like putting on a T-shirt."

"Before you continue, what was the suit made of?"

"Roger told my brother Howard he made the whole thing out of horsehide. Roger had skinned a red horse and attached or glued fur from an old fur coat onto the horsehide skin."

I was completely engrossed with the details Heironimus was providing. As he progressed with his story, I stopped him frequently and asked for descriptions of what he saw, heard, and felt.

"If the costume was made of horsehide, did it feel heavy?"

"It weighed maybe twenty, twenty-five pounds. It was a little bit heavy. Nothing to make me uncomfortable or anything. You could feel the weight. Horsehide would be heavy."

"And what was the color of the suit?"

"It was dark, real dark brown."

"Do you remember seeing any clasps, any metal parts?" I asked.

"No."

"How did the bottom portion of the suit fit around your waist?"

"I guess there was a kind of draw string. I don't remember."

A thought entered my mind. "Did you have to take all your clothes off to fit inside the suit?"

"No."

"What about odor? Did the suit have a smell?"

"It stunk. Roger skinned out a dead, red horse."

"OK. So they had put the middle piece, the torso, on you."

"Yeah." He unclasped his hands from his knee and held them above his head to demonstrate how he was fitted with the top piece of the suit. "The head fits on next. I think the head was made out of a, it seemed to me . . . like an old-time football helmet."

"You could feel a helmet when they put it on you?"

"Right. I could feel padding inside it." He measured about two inches between his thumb and index finger to indicate an amount of space. "There was a space between the top part of the head and the top part of the helmet."

"You could sense space between the top of your head and the inside of the helmet?"

"Oh, yeah."

"And you're saying the understructure of the Bigfoot's head was a helmet?"

"Right. The thing was built out around the helmet." He positioned his hand in front of his face.

"There was a facial piece, like a mask, across the front of the helmet?"

"I don't know if it was a mask." He struggled to describe the face of the "Bigfoot." "It had to be a mask of some kind that fit in around the helmet, in front of the helmet." He brought his thumbs and forefingers together to form "eye holes" and held them in front of his eyes and peeped through them at me. "Two eyes of course," he said.

"You looked through two slits?"

"Right. They were about this far from my eyes." He measured off an inch in front of his eyes. "I think he had glued part of that fur coat all the way around this thing, like this, stuck to the helmet. I think there was a mouthpiece here like that. It was kind of an oblong head. It wasn't easy to see out."

"I don't understand. Whoops, wait just a moment." I quickly flipped the cassette over. "OK, continue about the head piece."

"I couldn't see out real good because my eyes were set back from the eye holes. I had to move my head like this." He illustrated by jerking his head in short bursts.

"How long did it take for them to put the suit on you?"

"It wasn't hard to get it on. Maybe three or five minutes at the most."

I smiled. It probably was a sight—little Patterson next to the giant he had created, who was now standing erect, clad in fur.

"After I got the costume on, Roger asked me to walk out. He'd yell out at me, 'Swing your arms back like this!', or, 'Crouch down a little bit more like a gorilla walking.'"

"He would direct you?"

"Yes."

"And where did he have you walk?"

"Roger had a small pasture behind his house, maybe ten, twenty yards behind. There was an old log there down by the cabin in the pasture where I set down and put the suit on. Up there a little ways was a small apple tree—and I walked from the log to the apple tree and back, and come back, and talked a little bit, and I went back a couple of times."

I knew from studying Patterson's film that the "Bigfoot" walked smoothly. "Did you feel comfortable and natural walking in the suit?"

"Oh, yeah, it was easy, it was simple, yeah. I remember it was warm inside the suit. I got claustrophobic, I know that. Once the head was off, I did all right. With the head on, it made me claustrophobic."

"Describe some more how you practiced in the suit."

"I walked in a straight line, back and forth, maybe three times. He told me how to step out, how fast he wanted me to go. He didn't want me to run, naturally. 'You don't have to run' [said Patterson]. 'Just act like you had spotted 'em [Patterson and Gimlin] before they spotted you. Let's try it again.' Finally, he said, 'That's perfect, that's the way I want it.'"

"How long did it take you to master the gait and mannerisms of the Bigfoot?"

"Not very long."

I crossed several more questions off my list. "So then what?"

"They took the suit off. We sat around and B.S.-ed for awhile."

"And as you told me yesterday, they went down to California in September or October. That would have been sometime before October 20, 1967."

He moved in his chair. "I don't remember the exact date. I know it was hot down there. They were going down first to scout out a place. I was to follow down later, maybe a Monday or Wednesday or whatever it was. They told me how to get there. 'Go across the border into California, go to Yreka, turn right and follow the Klamath River to Happy Camp to Willow Creek. Meet us at the gas station. You can't miss it. It's right outside of town.' I think Roger and Bob left on Friday or Saturday. They wanted to use one of my horses. They knew he wouldn't jump or buck when he saw me in the suit, or be startled. He wouldn't mind packing the suit on his back in a sack. They stopped and got my horse. Bob had his horse truck. They took off for California."

"And what was the name of your horse?" I asked.

"Chico."

"So this must have been quite an adventure for you at your age," I commented.

"I wasn't married, I was twenty-six. I was going to get a thousand bucks. 'Ten minutes at the most,' they said."

"You'd have to act the Bigfoot for only ten minutes?"

"Yeah.

"You mentioned yesterday you drove down in your mother's car."

"Yep."

"Bob, this might be a good time for Pat to start taking your picture. Pat?"

Pat slipped off the bed.

"Well, in that case. . . ." He leaned over and picked up his hat from the floor. "I better put on my hat."

He tapped the hat down on his head and swiped his hand across the lip of the brim and looked proudly, if a little self-consciously, at Pat. She began moving quietly about the room taking photographs.

"OK, you drove your mother's car?" I said.

"I had a Corvette then made for drag racing," he said. "It had low, rear-end gears. If you went fast, the engine revved up and it was a gas-eatin' hog. My mother had bought a new car, a blue 1967 Buick. I asked her if I could use it for a couple of days. I didn't tell her what for. I said, 'I have a chance to make a whole bunch of money real quick.' She said, 'OK.'"

Heironimus said that he was to meet Patterson and Gimlin at a cut-rate, mini-service station at Willow Creek.

"I was there right on the money [5:00 P.M.]. I saw the truck parked there. It was on the left-hand side of the road. Roger was gassing the truck up. I pulled in. I parked maybe ten to fifteen feet from the truck. Bob come running up and says, 'Go on down the road a-ways. There's a pull-off down there. Wait for us there. We don't want anybody to see all three of us together talking. They might put two and two together.' So I went kind of west out of Willow Creek, on down the road and waited for them. They come by. I think we stopped, had a little conversation. 'Follow me,' [Gimlin or Patterson said]. I followed them. We drove, oh, it seems like about three miles out of town, and then we come to Bluff Creek Road and turned to the right and went up into the mountains there about, it seems to me like about four miles, maybe—five miles."

I felt my brow furrowing. Bluff Creek, where the filming would take place, wasn't even near Willow Creek. Bluff Creek was many miles north of Willow Creek. Had I caught Heironimus in a lie? Were Pat and I about to endure hours with an impostor? I concealed my feelings and continued to listen.

"And they had a place picked out so we could hide the car in a bunch of buck brush. It [the buck brush] was tall. We drove the car in and cut some brush, put it around the back of the car, hid the car, wiped the tracks out. You'd never know the car was there driving by. The camp was about half a mile north. They had a campsite right next to the Bluff Creek road."

Pat took her last photograph of Heironimus, and she settled back onto the bed.

"Describe the camp for me," I said.

"It was twenty to thirty yards off the road. They had a fire going. Had pack saddles throwed down, two horses tied to trees, feed for them. By that time it was probably dusk, gettin' towards dusk. So we set around and B.S.-ed for quite a while. I was tired. So I decided about eight o'clock, I said, "I think I'm goin' to bed,' so I crawled up in the dog house up there in the over-hang on the cab of the truck where you keep your saddle and your hay or dog or whatever. And I lay down in my sleeping bag in a hay pile and went to sleep."

The next morning, after coffee and breakfast, the three men saddled up Chico and one other horse. One of the men threw a sack or a duffel bag that contained the Bigfoot suit over the back of Patterson's horse. Then Gimlin and Heironimus mounted Chico with Heironimus sitting behind Gimlin. Patterson mounted his horse.

"Did Patterson tell you where you were going?" I asked.

"They just said they had a place picked out up the road here, about half a mile. Where they were camped was kind of on a little incline, and where we were going to film the footage, there was kind of a flat. There was a hillside in the back, an old creek bed running down, maybe even a little bit of a clear-cut through where it had been logged. They said, 'This is the place where we'll do this.'"

"Here." I handed him my pad and pen. "Draw me a map."

He sketched out a crude map that showed, in cross-section, an incline that led down to a flattened area where there was a large clearing bounded on one side by a wooded hillside. He sketched in Bluff Creek, a smattering of trees and brush, and a tree that had been uprooted and left behind a large hole in the ground. The Bigfoot literature reported that the Bluff Creek area had been ravaged by a flood several years before. I speculated that the fallen tree Heironimus sketched had been a victim of the flood.

"You got to the clearing, and then what happened?"

He crossed his legs. "We dismounted and unloaded the sack. I had to kind of sit down and pull it [the suit] on. It was stiff from about here [he gestured from his waist up]. They kind of helped me up and put the top on. Roger said, 'Just go over and stand there in that section, and when we get ready to film, you just start walkin'."

As Heironimus began drawing a line across the clearing with my pen, he described his route. "Here's where they started the footage. Then, right in here is where they started moving the camera, you know, shaking it, as I was walking."

"How did you know they were shaking the camera?"

"That horse didn't *know* how to buck," he sniffed.

"How far away were you from them before the filming started?"

"About forty yards."

"So you walked to the starting point by yourself?"

"Yeah."

"How did you know where to walk to?"

"'Go over there and stand,' Roger said. 'When you get to this point, we'll start filming.'"

"Did you hear them yell out?"

"He said, 'OK!' Or something like that."

I remembered the conventional story of the filming: Bigfoot was squatting by the creek when Patterson and Gimlin came upon the creature. Heironimus said that he didn't squat or kneel.

"I started walking," he continued. "I came to the creek, I walked through the sand. I walked across here—through a few trees right here," he said as he noted the places on the map, "maybe a downed log right in here or some brush. Anyway, I turned right here and looked at them. I looked back twice. I walked a little ways further towards these trees right here on the right." He rotated the tip of the pen to form a blob of ink designating the location.

"They said, 'Cut! That's it!' Here's this big blow-over [uprooted tree]. I jumped down in this hole"—and to show me, Heironimus stood up and jumped a few feet forward and squatted down like a frog, his arms bent next to his sides—"and yelled, '*Get this sonuvabitch off me right now!*' I was sweatin'. Sweat was pouring off of me inside that thing."

"Why did you jump in the hole?"

"I was afraid of getting shot. I wanted to get that thing off. I was sweatin'. I was claustrophobic. I wanted it off." I could hear anxiety in Heironimus's voice. "I thought I could be shot and killed by a hunter. The thought come to me the whole time I got to California. It even crossed my mind up there in Yakima. It was October, you know. They did have hunters out there."

"So they did talk to you beforehand about the possibility of a hunter shooting you while you were in the costume?"

"Yeah. The deal was they'd go down and scout the place out first, make sure there was nobody around the day we started shooting the film."

"They told you to look at them as you walked?"

"Right. 'Look at us a couple of times.' Like, 'I know where you're at. I can see you guys [Patterson and Gimlin]. I don't know what you are, but I can see you.' Like, 'If I had to, I could take off runnin',' you know, if they moved or started towards me."

"They gave you some idea of how you would act as an animal of this type?"

"Yes."

He continued. "It was shady, cool in the hole. Out of sight, that was the main thing. They rode up on their horses very quickly." He couldn't remember whether Patterson and Gimlin helped him out of the suit while he was in or out of the hole, but they took the suit off of him, returned it to the sack, and placed the sack back on Patterson's horse.

"Did Patterson say anything to you?"

"'I got it,' he said. 'It looked good. You done a good job. This is the way we wanted it.' We rode back to the camp. We stood around there for awhile and talked. They said they had to go back and make the tracks."

"In other words, make fake tracks of the Bigfoot at the film site?"

"Yes. 'We have to go back and make them. We'll either do it today, or tomorrow, and we're out of here, and come home.' Roger put the film in a envelope or a box with Al DeAtley's name on it. He gave it to me and said, 'Go to Eureka and mail it.'"

Then Patterson and Gimlin drove Heironimus in Gimlin's truck back to where his mother's car was hidden. The men removed the buck brush from the car. Heironimus remembered seeing a long, fresh scratch on the side of the car. He knew his mother wouldn't be happy. (Later, back home, he would buff out the scratch.) Patterson and Gimlin removed the sack containing the Bigfoot suit from the truck, pulled the suit from the sack, and laid it in the trunk of the Buick. Then, after saying good-bye, Heironimus drove to Eureka and mailed the film to DeAtley. He stayed overnight in Eureka, and he remembered renting a room in a small building whose siding was made of logs. The next day he drove home to Yakima. Heironimus's part in the entire "operation" had taken three days.

Heironimus sat back in his chair. He had been talking a long time. I discussed the last steps he had to perform to earn his thousand dollars—putting the film in the mail in Eureka and returning to Yakima with the suit. To me, the actions made sense. First, Patterson and Gimlin wanted to separate themselves as quickly as possible from the material evidence of the hoax; they didn't want to be caught with the costume. If someone should be caught, better it be Heironimus. Second, it appeared Patterson wanted DeAtley to handle the film; they didn't want to be accused of tampering with it. DeAtley would serve as an "objective third party." Or so it seemed to me.

"Why do you think they asked you to take the suit with you?" I asked Heironimus.

"Well, I don't know. I guess to get it back home before somebody saw it. I never thought about it."

"Why did they ask you to mail the film from Eureka?"

"Maybe they didn't want to take the chance of someone seeing me mailing it from Willow Creek."

Heironimus's hypothesis was plausible, for I knew that later Patterson would contact Al Hodgson, the local Bigfoot enthusiast in Willow Creek, to announce his amazing achievement. Hodgson, or other local residents, might have doubted Patterson's story if they saw a stranger in a blue Buick with Washington plates mailing a package at the Willow Creek post office near the time of Patterson's filming. Worse, they would have rejected Patterson's story completely upon reading in the Eureka *Times Standard* on October 21 that Patterson, and not the stranger in the Blue Buick, had air-mailed the film to Al DeAtley in Yakima.

Yes, mailing the film from Eureka made sense. Patterson's tracks were covered. But why did Patterson put the Bigfoot suit in the trunk of the Buick, and not keep it? Heironimus shared the same puzzlement I did: "because when my mother opened the door of the trunk, there the thing was lookin' at her."

This part of the story was most interesting. Heironimus had revealed the incident to me the previous day in the motel. Now he elaborated. He remembered arriving back at his mother's house in Yakima either in the afternoon or evening. While he was (apparently) sleeping, his mother, Opal, opened the trunk of the Buick before she went to the grocery store. She was shocked to see the Bigfoot suit in the trunk. Subsequently, Aunt Willa visited her, and a mystified Opal disclosed the oddity to her. Aunt Willa proceeded to slip onto her head the head of the "Bigfoot" and then strolled back and forth on Opal's porch while peeking into the front window. John Miller, Bob's nephew and a frequent visitor, ran outside and joined in the fun. The fun ended, and Aunt Willa returned the head to the trunk and shut it. Thoroughly confused and wanting nothing to do with the suit, Opal abandoned her trip to the grocery store, leaving the keys in either the trunk or the ignition. Later, at night, Patterson and Gimlin, unseen, removed the suit from the trunk. Also unnoticed, they returned Chico to Heironimus's corral.

For thirty minutes I probed this incident with Heironimus. I also asked his opinion regarding Les Johnson's and Merle Warehime's statements that he showed the suit to a number of bystanders at the Idle Hour Tavern and boasted that he wore it for Patterson.

"Did you frequent the Idle Hour Tavern?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah. That was our hangout."

"OK. What happened next?"

"I tried to run into Roger and Bob a couple of times, Bob especially."

"So they'd give you the money?"

He thought for a moment. "I may have asked Bob, 'Am I ever going to be paid?' But then I saw Al DeAtley at the Saddle Tree [a nightclub and restaurant near the Yakima Airport that has since burned down] about six months or maybe a year later [1968], and I asked him, 'Hey, you guys owe me a thousand dollars. Am I ever going to get paid?' He said, 'That's between you and Roger.'"

Glenda spoke up. She remembered Heironimus speaking to DeAtley later than 1968. When she first met Bob in 1969, he revealed his role in the hoax. Then they were engaged in 1970. That was the year Bob approached DeAtley at the Saddle Tree. "It was nothing to me," she said indifferently. "Nothing became of it."

"Why did you ask DeAtley for the money?" I asked Heironimus.

"He's the one who financed Roger on this whole trip."

"You knew that?"

"Yes. Because I mailed the film to Al, you know, and I started figuring he's got something to do with this. I come to find out he's the one financed Roger." He added sourly, "It got to a point there after a year and a half of it, that keeping quiet didn't matter to me." So he started leaking out bits and pieces of the story to friends and family.

"You saw that money was being made by Roger and Al."

"Right. And I was gettin' *nothin'*."

"And you just started telling people?"

"Why not?" he said bitterly.

"What was their reaction?"

"Well, some of them knew it already anyway."

"Because it got through the grapevine?"

"Sure."

I reviewed the questions on the pad of paper. Good. Heironimus had been very thorough. But several more questions needed to be asked. I replaced the tape with a blank one.

"Do you remember participating in Patterson's movie off of the South Fork of the Ahtanum?"

"Vaguely. I remember they shot it just above Roger's house. There used to be an emergency landing strip up there. I remember we unloaded our horses and took off on up towards Red Saddle." Hound dogs ran through brush and trees as if chasing a Bigfoot; and his brother Howard was with him. He knew who John Ballard was, and he met Jerry Merritt at least once at Merritt's house when he went there to help him breed a donkey with a mare.

I wanted to know more about the suit. He repeated Howard's story, that Patterson skinned the hide off a dead horse, a little red one, then glued pieces of a fur coat onto the hide. Heironimus found this plausible. "You can see slick parts on the Bigfoot in the film," he said. "There are bare patches and then hair parts like it was sheddin'. I remember it had a smell. It could have been horse hide. I don't know." Then he added cryptically, "I think there was more than one Bigfoot suit."

The Ken Pettijohn sighting flashed across my mind, the one Heironimus recalled the first time I called him, and which Patterson describes in his book. An alleged Bigfoot also visited Merritt's property. Did Patterson make more than one suit to pull off local stunts and hoaxes?

"Do you have any idea where Patterson's suit could be?" I asked.

"No idea."

"Well, Bob, we're finished. Of course, we'll have to talk a lot more. First, I have to listen to the tapes."

He nodded.

"Wasn't this film just a prank?" I asked as I capped my pen.

"Sure."

"I've viewed the film clip on documentaries. Wasn't it just a bunch of big boys, grownup boys, so to speak—"

"Tryin' to make a buck," he said.

"Trying to make a buck off a joke."

"Right."

"At least that's how I look at it," I said.

"But some people don't look at it like a joke," he said seriously, "especially those people making money off it."

"Right, it was serious business."

"It developed into serious business."

Our eyes held for a moment. "Why did you do it?"

"I was twenty-six at the time. You do things at twenty-six you wouldn't do now. Hell, I'd do anything, you know."

"At that point in your life?"

"Sure. It didn't matter to me. Fist fights. Anything."

"So you got into fights?"

Glenda picked up her purse from the floor, and the couple began stirring to leave.

"Yep. Went to taverns," he said. "You know, before you leave town you oughta go look at DeAtley's house. It's huge. Got dozens of rooms. Up on a hill on Scenic Drive." He gave me directions.

Someone knocked on the door. I squeezed around the table and opened it. A blue-smocked woman looked up at me: "Cleaning service."

"Whoa! It's nearly eleven! Well, Bob." I extended my hand. "I want to thank you for the interview. I'll be in touch." He shook my hand firmly, and I said good-bye.

Pat and I quickly packed the car, and we were soon driving on the snowy streets toward DeAtley's mansion. We parked in the Shopko parking lot on Summit View Drive where I took photos of the castlelike structure a mile away, partially veiled in mist high on the top of Scenic Drive. We then drove to Englewood, a neighborhood of fashionable homes, to get a better view. Shivering on the edge of the road, we craned our necks. Far above, on the edge of a steep, white hillside lorded a gargantuan, yellowish-tan house. "Wow!" I exclaimed. I studied it. "You know, Pat, it's ugly actually." She snapped some photos. Then we left town.

As usual after interviews, most of the way home we talked about what we had heard.

"It makes sense." I bit into a miniature chocolate donut, one of our ritual snacks on these trips. "I'd do just what Patterson and Gimlin did. I'd scout the site, rendezvous with Bob near nightfall, shoot the film the next day in ten minutes or less, return to camp, and send Heironimus on his way."

I smiled. "I have to admit it, I used to think that if the film were a hoax, it was an intricate, complex conspiracy. It wasn't. It was simple. They found a naïve guy in Bob Heironimus. He was the right size, and," I quickly calculated, "eight years younger than Patterson, an older and experienced schemer who found it easy to convince him. Good ol' Bob follows Patterson's instructions to the letter. 'And keep your mouth shut, and you'll get a thousand bucks.'"

I finished the donuts. "Bob is trusting. He puts his faith in a man's word."

"And he kept his word," Pat said. She peeled back the seal on a can filled with salted nuts. The sky was an iron gray; raindrops started splattering on the windshield.

"Isn't his story amazing?" I tossed a macadamia nut into my mouth. Pat opened two diet Cokes. *Hiss!*

"All these years," I said, "keeping his mouth shut. Then I come along. He sees all the Bigfoot documentaries being shown on TV. And he says, 'Time to talk. And I want some money, too.' Why not? DeAtley and the Pattersons made a killing off it."

"I always had a gut feeling he'd come forward," Pat said.

"Well, I didn't." I fell silent. "Pat, I'm not ready to accept his story. He said the footage was shot at Willow Creek."

I was suspicious, I told her, because Willow Creek wasn't *even near* Bluff Creek, the actual film site. I'd need to pick through each of his words to determine the exact dates and times he left for Bluff Creek and returned to Yakima, when his mother discovered the suit, when he went to the Idle Hour Tavern and let his secret out, when Patterson and Gimlin stealthily retrieved the suit and returned Chico to Heironimus's corral. If I knew when Heironimus traveled to Bluff Creek and returned, I could fix the date he mailed the film to DeAtley, and thus the dates it was probably received, transported to a film lab, and returned to Yakima, in time for its first showing on October 22, 1967, in DeAtley's house. If the film were processed *before* October 20, then Heironimus was telling the truth, and Patterson and Gimlin were liars. I needed to dig deep into Heironimus's memory—every action he took, what Patterson and Gimlin said, what Heironimus said, what he saw and felt. A special item in the interrogation would be the Bigfoot suit, its structural features, the look and feel of it, any clues that might reveal how Patterson constructed it, if he did. I needed more information regarding Heironimus's personality, interests, work history—anything that would reveal his character, values, beliefs, motivations. I shared Pat's enthusiasm that Heironimus appeared to be truthful, but I was wary. I would question *everything* he said. If I exposed him as a liar and destroyed his story, so be it.

Therefore, on January 23, 29, and 31, 2001, I interviewed Heironimus again, by phone.

Unfortunately, regarding the Bigfoot suit, a long time had passed, and he couldn't add much. How the suit managed to fit him without Patterson or Gimlin ever measuring him, he could only speculate. Perhaps Patterson knew his approximate size just by looking at him. This made sense. I knew Patterson was an observant, practiced artist who drew cowboys and horses to scale.

Regarding the "Bigfoot's" legs, Heironimus repeated what he had said before, that they came to his waist and felt like rubber hip boots: "That's what makes the calves of the thing bulge out. Look at the ankle, how fat they are. When they say the muscles are moving, that's from the rubber." Interesting point. Dahinden was always ranting about "muscle masses moving."

Heironimus believed the "Bigfoot's" feet were slippers. He remembered seeing foot-shaped slippers in stores in the mid-1960s.

And the "Bigfoot's" hands? "They felt like a stiff leather glove."

I had trouble understanding how Heironimus could see with the headpiece on, especially since his right eye was artificial.

"There was an inch to an inch-and-a-half between my eye and the cutouts in the mask," he admitted. "But I could see good enough to see where I was going." He had injured his right eye in an accident when he was four years old, "But it's not a disability." He had worked eighteen years for the Noel Corporation driving a truck; most recently he worked in the canning division. His vision hadn't impaired his ability to use tools and to work a third of his life for the company.

He remembered the "Bigfoot's" breasts: "They were solid. They weren't bouncy." He didn't know how they were attached. "I never gave it much thought."

He sensed that the mask was made of leather, but he wasn't sure.

He didn't know how Patterson connected the three pieces of the suit together once Heironimus was inside it. To the untutored eye, there were no signs of seams or junctures in the fur of the Bigfoot in the film. But then the Bigfoot was some distance from the photographer. Perhaps the Bigfoot suit was carried in "a hop sack," but Heironimus said, "I don't know."

Repeated questions from me regarding other aspects of the suit elicited similar responses.

I finally concluded that Heironimus had simply worn the suit and walked in it, and hadn't examined it. But why should he? His only interest was wearing it for ten minutes and getting a thousand bucks, the most money he ever made in his life at one time.

He surmised that he was asked to mail the film to Al DeAtley "because he was footing the bill. He wanted the film."

He didn't know why the suit was put into the trunk. "In case they got stopped, you know, or had trouble or something like that? They didn't want anybody to see it."

He left the suit in the car trunk because "They said, 'Just leave it in the trunk.' That way they'd know where it was at. 'When we bring the horse back, we'll get the suit out of the trunk.'"

I was exasperated. "Bob, your case in many ways is a 'he said/she said.' Patterson is dead, and I doubt Gimlin will ever talk. When you go public, people might say you're simply exploiting Patterson's name because you were once acquainted with him. What will you say?"

"I have a lie detector test that I took," he said confidently. "There's people around here who've known for thirty-three years that it was me."

"And they know it was you because you told them?"

"I told them, and my mom wouldn't lie. She saw the suit."

"I need to talk to these people. I need names."

He readily gave me the names of several friends. Unfortunately, a number of other people with whom he had confided were dead, he said.

"Who did you tell your story to first?"

"My family, and then probably my wife's family. After my mom saw the suit, and it leaked out that it was in the back of the car, well, most people around here did know it. My mother is out of town. But she'll be back in a month. She'll probably talk to you."

I switched gears. "The Idle Hour Tavern in Wiley City. What went on there?"

"There was the Simcoe Tavern also across the street from the Idle Hour. Well, everybody hung out at the Idle Hour. We'd shoot pool, play shuffle board, we bullshitted there. Somebody said, 'Betcha can't ride your horse in here and make him drink beer out of a hat.' So I rode him in there, and he did, and I turned around and rode him right back out."

I laughed. "Rode him right into the tavern?"

"Yep."

"Drank right out of a hat?"

"Yep. He drank a little. I had to duck under the door just to get in. Also, I remember a guy bet me a six pack of beer I couldn't load Chico into the back of a pickup with no racks or anything on it. I led him up there and said, 'Get in,' and he jumped right into the back of the pickup."

"Ha! I'm under the impression it was pretty wild back in those days."

"Oh, yeah. Just guys around here, and girls, too. We all run around together, done things together, partied together. That was about it."

"And you got into fights."

"Well," he hesitated. "Occasionally I got into fights. It takes an awful lot to get me mad, but once I'm mad, I'm just like a cyclone. I didn't go out lookin' for trouble. Let's just say I didn't take any shit from anybody. If they give me shit, I give it back. Let's put it that way."

I continued questioning him. He repeated that Willow Creek was the rendezvous point to join up with Patterson and Gimlin. I kept silent. Instead, I asked him to draw a map showing the location of the hidden Buick, the campsite, the creek, and other key features of his story, and to label the cardinal directions—north, south, east, west—in relation to the features. I didn't tell him what I was planning, but when I traveled to Yakima to interview his mother, I'd ask him to show me on the map what he did where and when. If his descriptions differed from his tape-recorded statements and from the crude map he had drawn for me in the Big Valley Motel—*and* if the locations of the various sites on the map differed from the locations that the Bigfooters Byrne and Dahinden had published in their books in the mid-1970s—Heironimus's story would collapse.

But as I constructed this plan, I caught myself. What if Heironimus had the Bigfooters' books in his house? If so, he could copy their maps in his own hand and precisely show the relationship of Bluff Creek, the logging roads, Patterson's campsite, and the film site to each other and to the cardinal points. In this way, his story would be quite credible. However, I quickly discounted this scenario, for even if he had the Bigfooters' books, why had he referred to Willow Creek as the rendezvous point when he should have referred to the town of *Weitchpec*, which the Bigfooters had marked on their maps as the closest town to Bluff Creek? *Willow Creek was more than twenty miles to the south!*

As much as I silently criticized Heironimus's reference to Willow Creek as the rendezvous point, I began to wonder if the Willow Creek problem was simply a matter of the erosion of his memories over thirty-three years.

After gathering information on Heironimus's work history to determine his stability and whether lack of money was motivating him to tell a lie, I decided to fill in Heironimus's complete biography in more detail the next time I saw him.

"Patterson really planned it out, didn't he?" I commented at the end of the last phone interview.

"Yep. It was pretty well planned. I mean, for them to drive all the way down there, scout the place out, come back up here, make the suit, and then go all the way back down there. They knew what they were doing."

"And you were the perfect . . ."

"Sucker!" he filled in resentfully.

"Well, Bob, I'll be in touch. I'm sure I'll have more questions."

"OK."

After I hung up, I leaned back, stretched my arms and legs, emitted a loud yawn, and looked at my watch. Time to call it a night. I stapled together my notes from the interview. Despite some nagging concerns regarding some details of Heironimus's story, I had no overwhelming reason to disbelieve him—at least not yet. Only four people—if they were involved in the hoax—could corroborate Heironimus's story. The first was Patterson, but he was dead. The second was Bob Gimlin, and he wasn't about to grant me an interview. The third was Al DeAtley. He admitted to me that from the beginning he thought the film was a hoax. He had also raised my suspicions because of his total lack of memory regarding the handling and processing of Patterson's film. Finally, there was Patty Patterson, who, Heironimus said, stood at a window and watched him put on the suit in her backyard. Yet, so far, she had shown no interest in answering my questions. In addition, as far as I knew, no photographs, film, audiotapes, or written statements existed to prove that the suit had ever even existed. If I could find the suit, I could compare its details to those of the creature in Patterson's film. And I could further authenticate it by having its materials identified and dated. There was also Dahinden, the one man who knew the most about Patterson and the entire case, but he refused to allow me to inspect his files. Considering the apparent extensive investigation he had performed on Patterson, perhaps he had secret information regarding Heironimus, which he had kept hidden these many decades. But I was certain I would never gain Dahinden's cooperation. He hated scientists. No. At this point in the investigation, it was merely Heironimus standing up against the entire world and declaring, "I was the Bigfoot in Roger Patterson's film. Believe me or don't believe me. I don't really care."

Then I recalled Cassidy's cryptic statement at Jackson's Sports Bar, that Heironimus had something that would prove his story. This interested me, but for the moment I wanted Heironimus to completely trust me. Once that happened, I'd ask him to reveal his secret.

I closed Heironimus's folder and turned off the desk lamp. In the darkness, I sat and thought. Les Johnson and Merle Warehime had themselves said, independently of each other, that they had been physically present outside or near the Idle Hour Tavern when they had seen or heard talk that the suit was in the back of a car; next to that car stood Heironimus, who said he had worn the suit in Patterson's film.

Walking to the bedroom, I remembered that I had asked Heironimus if he and Glenda were worried about a lawsuit. He had looked at me, I remembered, with an expression of resolute conviction and said, "Yeah. We think about it. We talk about it. I'm not worried because it's the truth. *I'm telling the truth.*"

I pulled the covers up to my neck and listened to the expansive silence of the darkened house all around me, Pat's soft breathing, and the resounding stillness of the night outside the window. My thoughts drifted up into the sky filled with bright stars winking through the gray clouds of winter, then streamed over the mountains into the Ahtanum Valley. I pictured Patterson alone out in the woods at night, on horseback, hunting for Bigfoot. "Roger," I thought, "Roger, what are you going to do? What are you going to do? Bob's breaking the silence."

21

BIGFOOT WALKS

I fully accept the Patterson film. [Bigfoot's gait is] consistent with a five-hundred-pound biped. I've attempted to imitate it, and I really can't do it worth a damn.

—**Grover Krantz**

You haven't seen my uncle walk!

—**John Miller, nephew of Bob Heironimus**

At 1:00 P.M. on February 24, 2001, Pat and I pulled into Bob Heironimus's driveway.

Heironimus, in a pleasant mood, greeted us from the porch and waved us into the living room of his modestly appointed house. Pat and I settled into a sofa. Glenda entered the room and said hello. "We need to interview your mother, your nephew, and you, of course. But first, Bob, we want to measure you. Then I want to videotape you outside, walking."

"Alright. My mother should be here soon."

For fifteen minutes we measured Heironimus using a tape and ruler. We started with his height. He removed his boots and stood in the kitchen, his heels and his back pressed firmly against the door frame. Then we recorded his weight using his bathroom scales. Next we measured parts of his body. Pat recorded the results on a clipboard.

The results were as follows:

Height: 6'¼"
Weight: 219 pounds
Head (forehead): 23"
Hat size: 7¼"
Neck: 18"
Sleeve length: 35"

Biceps: 16"
Chest: 47"
Pant size: 34" inseam
Waist to ankle bone: 40"
Boot size: 9½

Although Heironimus wasn't an extremely large man, I could easily imagine him as a Bigfoot. I presumed he was bulkier when younger, and the mass of material and hair that formed the suit would transform him into a passable Bigfoot, especially if photographed from a distance using a shaky camera. An interesting phenomenon exists in which the motion picture medium adds height and weight to subjects. In real life, we see objects in three dimensions as a result of our stereoscopic vision (two eyes). As a result, we are better able to gauge and sense the height and weight of objects. But in the world of motion picture film, the single lens of the camera compresses the real world into two dimensions, and objects suffer from a flattening effect. People are always surprised when they meet movie stars face to face and discover they aren't as big as they assumed they were.

"OK, Bob." I rolled up the measuring tape. "Let's go outside."

Pat and I retrieved the video equipment from the car, and the Heironimuses escorted us to a long strip of pasture land behind their house. "I use it to practice my golf," Heironimus said. Gray irrigation pipe ran lengthwise down the center of the browning strip. Glenda leaned on the other side of the fence that separated the pasture from the house.

While I set up the camera on a tripod, Heironimus wandered about the pasture enjoying himself. It was cold, but the blue sky was crystal clear, perfect for videotaping. "OK, Bob, come on over here and stand next to the fence, and when I give the signal, walk in your normal fashion."

He stood fifty feet away, his back to the fence. He was wearing a green cap with the word EARTH20 ("earth water") on it; a white-sleeved, green jacket; jeans; and cowboy boots.

"I wish he was wearing a Bigfoot suit," I whispered to Pat. "But this should give us an idea." I picked up Heironimus in the viewfinder. "Alright, Bob, start walking normally. Just be yourself."

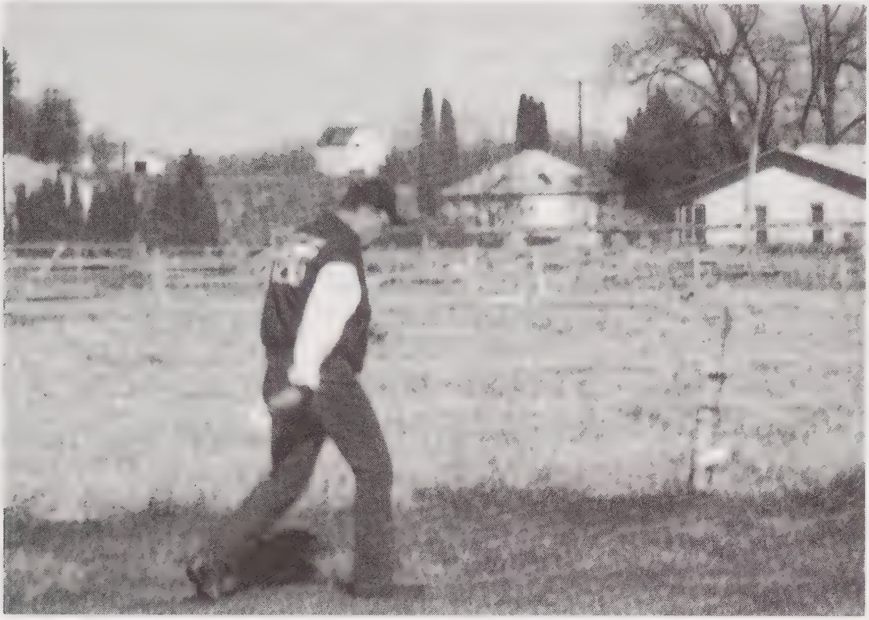
He proceeded to walk from my left to my right down the length of the pasture. As I tracked him through the viewfinder, I sensed a light, bouncy motion to his tread. Something was familiar in the walk; something tell-tale. Was it the manner in which he was extending his legs and then placing his feet on the ground?

"OK, good!" I shouted and gestured. "Come on back, and let's do that one more time."

On my order, he walked again, and I shot more footage.

"Good! Now, I want you to walk like the Bigfoot."

He strolled back to the fence. As he awaited my command, he hung his head



Bob Heironimus, demonstrating how he walked in Roger Patterson's Bigfoot film. His walk bears an uncanny resemblance to Patterson's "Bigfoot." Photo by Pat Long.

and swung his arms back and forth. He seemed to be running through in his mind the walk he was about to make.

"Pat, watch him really closely." I centered him in the viewfinder. "OK, Bob! Get ready . . . set . . . go!"

He walked with long, purposeful steps, knees bent, arms swinging in long, vigorous arcs, shoulders slumped forward, face toward the ground. The puffy sleeves of his jacket added mass to his upper body. A sudden chill rippled down my nape. I blurted out excitedly to Pat, "I think he wore the Bigfoot suit!"

I swiveled the camera, tracking him. Yes, there was something about his gait. A fluid, effortless motion in his forceful tread, the knees bent so, the tempo of his long arms arcing gracefully through the air, the coordinated flowing movement of all the limbs—there was something I could *palpably feel* that eerily echoed the self-assured stride of the two-legged thing in Patterson's footage. . . .

"He *was* the Bigfoot!" Pat cried out in a low voice.

"Well, there's *something* going on here! Something in his feet."

Then his upper torso twisted to the right, one sleeve-bulging arm swinging back, the other arm flinging forward. And his one good eye looked at me. I shivered with new excitement: *Patterson's Bigfoot just looked at me!*

His upper torso swiveled back into forward position, and he continued walking. He had never missed a beat. At about a hundred feet from where he started, he swerved to the right, stepped over the irrigation pipe, and walked toward me, still in Bigfoot character.

"OK, Bob! That's fine."

His expression was serious as he walked by me; clearly, this exercise was no joke.

"One more time, please," I called out.

He waited at the fence, rocking on his heels and periodically tapping them on the ground. A woman laughed. Turning, I saw that a gray-haired woman had joined Glenda behind the fence. Pat walked over to talk to them.

For ten more minutes, I taped close-ups of Heironimus walking like the Bigfoot and giving me "the look." I also ran toward him, shooting and shaking the camera to simulate Patterson's actions.

"OK, Bob, that's it!"

Opal Heironimus, Bob Heironimus's mother, saw the Bigfoot suit in the trunk of her 1967 Buick. Photo by Pat Long.

Pat returned and we packed up the equipment and joined Heironimus, Glenda, and the gray-haired woman at the fence; she was Bob's mother, Opal.

"I'm sorry how I treated you over the phone," she said in a small voice.

"Oh, that's all right," I said, puzzled. Then I remembered. I had called her a year before in a futile attempt to interview her.

Inside Heironimus's house, Glenda helped Opal out of her coat. Then, Opal, Bob, Pat, and I sat at the kitchen table. Glenda rested against a counter, folded her arms, and prepared to listen. I removed my tape recorder, pad, and pen from my briefcase.

I could see that Opal had either dressed up for the interview, or just come from church. She wore a soft, ivory-colored sweater with a bright, red collar, a slender necklace of red beads, and gold earrings sparkling with clusters of artificial jewels. Her short hair was neatly cut and permed. Her glistening red lips broke into a nervous smile as she waited for me to begin. She struck me as an attractive, healthy woman with erect, formal bearing.

I had debated during the drive to Yakima whether I should separate Bob from Opal to prevent him from influencing her answers. I concluded that if they were in league with each other she had by now memorized her lie. I decided to allow Bob to be present to put her at ease but insist he say nothing. I explained to Opal the ground rules and my objective—to ascertain the truth of Patterson's film. She granted me permission to record her.

She was eighty-one years old, she told me, born in Hartshorn, Missouri, "down in the Ozarks," two hundred miles southwest of St. Louis. She, her husband, and their children moved to Yakima in the late 1940s. For a time, the family lived in a house on Ninetieth Avenue, less than a quarter of a mile south of where Heironimus and Glenda now lived. Opal's husband was deceased, and she now lived in Union Gap on the east side of Yakima.

I steered her to the subject of the interview. "Let's talk about this experience of yours, which involved your car."

"Well," she said in a soft, down-home voice, "one day Bob said, 'Mom, I want to borrow your car for a while, maybe for a few days.' So I let him have it." The car was a brand new, blue 1967 Buick. Bob lived with her at the time.

"Did he tell you why he wanted to borrow it?"

"No, no," she said in a high-pitched quaver. "I didn't know more where he went than nothin' in the world. He just said he wanted to borrow it and that he'd be back in a few days."

"So what happened?"

"Well, after he got back, the next morning I was goin' to put some boxes in the trunk to go pick up some apples, and when I opened the trunk, here was this black thing layin' there, and I stepped back like that"—she pressed her shoulders against the back of her chair—"and I didn't know what to do. Nobody was around, and I kind of looked around a little bit. Then I went back up to where I could see again—not too close, but where I could peep in—and then I discovered it was just—just the suit." She smiled.

This event occurred about 10:00 A.M. One of Opal's routines was to place apple boxes in the trunk to hold the apples she frequently bought at a local fruit stand.

"And it startled you?" I asked.

"Oh, sure." She laughed at the memory. "It looked like an animal to me!"

Pat inserted, "She told me earlier outside that she finally realized that it wasn't alive."

Opal emitted warbling laughter. "After I saw it, I looked around to see if anyone was around 'cause I thought maybe I might have to have help. I didn't know." She chuckled. "Then, I thought, well, I better get up there and see what it really is. Then I discovered it was just a suit. But that head layin' there, you know, staring at me!"

"How did you know it was a suit?" I asked.

"I could see then. It made sense. It wasn't alive." Her eyes were bright with simplicity and innocence.

The suit, which filled most of the trunk, was brownish-black and had a hairy, dark-colored face like that in Patterson's Bigfoot film, which she eventually saw on television.

"What did you do next?"

"I didn't do anything. I shut the trunk, and I didn't go anywhere. Because I didn't know what the deal was."

"Well, did you go in the house or talk to anyone?"

"I went in the house, and my sister-in-law, Willa Smith, lived right up the street, and she came down—she was always down at my house two or three times a day—and so, when she got down, I said, 'I want to show you something.' I opened up the trunk and let her look."

"Is Willa Smith still alive?"

"No. She died about ten years ago."

"What was her reaction when she saw the suit?"

"She laughed about it." Opal giggled. "She was a big, ol' cut-up. She got braved up [became brave] and put the head on. We had a big, long porch with a big picture window in it. And she put that head on and got up to the window and looked through, you know, to see if she could see anyone. That's how she was—she was a clown herself." She tittered.

The side screen door of Bob's house squeaked, and a slight, gray-haired man entered the kitchen. He greeted the Heironimuses and took a chair next to me. Opal continued.

"'I've got something to show you,'" she said to Willa Smith when she visited Opal that afternoon. When Opal opened the trunk, Willa jumped back in surprise.

"Did you tell her what it was?"

"Yeah. I said, 'I don't know what. It's a suit. I don't know where it's come from.'"

Willa picked up the head and put it on.

"That must have seemed kind of funny to you," I said, "her wearing the head."

"Oh, yeah! I wouldn't have put it on myself. But she did. We were laughing a little bit, because she was clowning it out with it, you know." She grinned.

"What happened next?"

"We put it back in the trunk, closed her up."

Bob spoke. "I want you to meet John Miller, my nephew."

I gripped his hand. "Hi, John." As a first impression, Miller struck me as an average, good-humored man.

I turned back to Opal, and for the next half hour she pieced together as best she could the events that occurred shortly before and after she saw the suit. Twice she asked Bob to help her remember, but he declined, as I had instructed him.

To the best of her recollection, she saw the suit the morning after Bob returned from California. At the time, she didn't know where her son had driven her car. All Bob had ever said was that he wanted to borrow the car. It was some time later, when she was watching a television show that featured Patterson's film, that she connected the suit in the car trunk to Bob borrowing her car. "I hollered to him. Bob came into the living room, sat down, and looked at it [the TV show] a little bit, and then just got right back up, and walked out, and never said anything. I figure he was just a-playin' around, you know, up there in the hills in California. I don't know how I came to that conclusion, to be truthful about it."

Late that night after she saw the suit, Patterson and Gimlin dropped off Chico and took the suit. "It disappeared," Opal recalled. "I never seen it leave, and I do remember them comin' in with a horse in a green truck and Bob's horse, Chico." Patterson and Gimlin were able to retrieve the suit from the trunk because, she speculated, she must have left her keys in either the trunk lock or the ignition, a common practice in those days when one trusted one's neighbors. She did remember seeing the scratch on her car later when she and her sister Myrtle were out in the orchard next to the house.

I thanked her for her patience in answering my questions, and I turned to John Miller. Forty-two years old, Miller, son of Bob's sister Mary, was eight in 1967 when the suit incident occurred.

"What do you remember?"

"I just remember they had the trunk open, and I remember looking in there, and, 'What's that!' and pickin' up and foolin' with it. And I can remember finding the head and, being a young kid, I just put it right on. It was hot. And it stunk. I can remember going up to their front porch and lookin' in the front window to see if somebody could see me. I was going to try and scare somebody." He didn't remember Willa Smith putting the head on.

Had Opal remembered the story correctly, but switched John with Willa? Yet it was certainly possible Willa and John had both worn the head.

"When did you learn that Bob played Bigfoot?" I asked.

"It's just something I've always known," Miller said, "and I tell you what, if you ever watch that footage and watch him walk, and then you have him walk down the road, you'll see—they walk exactly the same. I always got a kick out of that." He had watched a documentary recently in which someone said a human couldn't walk like Patterson's Bigfoot. "Yeah, right! You haven't seen my uncle walk!"

Everyone, including me, burst into laughter. I struggled for self-control, but here I was with four members of the Heironimus family, all adamant that Bob had worn a Bigfoot suit in Patterson's film. Three family members had seen the suit, including Bob. Unfortunately, one member was dead. Why would Opal, one of the witnesses, eighty-one years old, having lived more than fifty years in Yakima, who surely had friends and a reputation, lie to the public? Were these people conspirators who were supporting Bob Heironimus in a lie that he had concocted nearly thirty-four years ago in order to make money from his story? Although not impossible, it just didn't seem probable.

"Bob, let's see if we can sort out better the sequence of events when you returned from California."

Bob said he was "pretty sure" when Opal discovered the suit he was sleeping. Having driven nonstop from California, he would have arrived home in the afternoon or evening. The arrival time depended upon how early he had left Eureka after spending the night there and how fast he drove. Most likely quite tired, he went immediately to bed. Opal estimated she found the suit at 10:00 A.M. the following day. The afternoon of that day Willa Smith and John Miller performed their antics with the head. Then, the head back inside the trunk, Opal postponed her trip to the fruit stand. Bob woke up later that morning or afternoon, but Opal did not confront him. "I just didn't know what it [the suit] was," she told me. "I didn't know what to do. I just left it alone." That evening Patterson and Gimlin returned Chico. With the car keys in the trunk lock or ignition, they opened the trunk and removed the suit. The following morning, Opal and Bob saw Chico in the pasture. Opal or Bob discovered that the suit wasn't in the trunk. But neither of them ever brought up the issue of why the suit had been in the trunk, or why or how it disappeared.

Weeks or months passed. While viewing Patterson's film on TV, Opal suddenly remembered the suit in the trunk and its uncanny similarity to the Bigfoot in the film. She then remembered her son's mysterious three-day absence, the reappearance of Chico in the pasture, and the strange disappearance of the suit. All the pieces of the puzzle suddenly fell together: *My son must have worn the suit in that Patterson film!* Her son's odd behavior when he sat with her in the living room to view the film convinced her even more. But Bob had sworn to tell no one; that would have included Opal. He wanted his thousand bucks. Sometime later, possibly in 1968 or 1969, he finally revealed the truth to Opal and his family—and a year later to his future wife. Exactly what he said when he revealed the truth had faded away. Also, there was a gap in the timeline when he also confessed, supposedly, to his buddies in front of the Idle Hour Tavern. Why he did not remember this incident was puzzling, although an explanation had been germinating in my mind. I decided to discuss it with him later.

"Are you finished interviewing me?" Opal asked politely.

"Yes. Thank you for your time."

I asked Bob if he had drawn the map I had requested.

"Yep." He brought to the kitchen table a crudely drawn map made of drawing paper. Although not to scale, the map showed the cardinal points and the major landmarks and roads he had named in his story. The map indicated he had traveled two to three miles west on the main highway outside Willow Creek; turned right—or north—onto the Bluff Creek Road; then drove two miles up a hill. The map showed that Opal's car was hidden about twenty yards off the left-hand side of the Bluff Creek Road. Patterson and Gimlin's camp was located about a quarter of a mile further up the road about twenty to thirty yards off the left-hand side. From this camp, the three men rode on two horses about a half a mile further up the road to the film site.

"This is a useful map, Bob. But there's a big problem. Bluff Creek is near the Klamath River, which is near the town of Weitchpec, not Willow Creek. Here, let me show you."

I removed my atlas from my briefcase. "See." And I rapped my fingertip on Weitchpec. "The film was supposedly taken way up here near Weitchpec," and I pointed to Willow Creek to the south, "*not way in the hell down here!*"

"Well, I'll be damned." He was shocked, but not unduly.

"So there's a problem here." I looked him in the eye.

"Right. I see that." Although surprised, his overall composure was unruffled. He peered closely at the opened atlas in front of him. "I see that. Alright, one of those little town's is where they met me. When I drove in, they were at the gas station. I thought it was Happy Camp all these years. It wasn't evidently. It was this one [Weitchpec, south of Happy Camp] or Willow Creek—wherever Bluff Creek is."

I gritted my teeth. Bluff Creek is near Weitchpec! I inhaled deeply through my nose. "OK, Bob, do you remember coming to . . . *a small town?*"

"Yep. Yep. I went through Happy Camp. I know. They were having a rodeo there. That's where the Bigfoot Museum, all the hoopla there."

I shook my head. "No, no, Bob. There's a Bigfoot Museum in *Willow Creek.*"

"Well, anyway." He stared at the map in the atlas, then looked at me. "There was a really small building, not very high. I think there were two rows of gas pumps. I pulled across going west, pulled off the south side. That's when Bob come running over and said, 'Don't say anything. Go on down the road. There's a turnoff down there. You'll see. Wait for us.'"

Then, Heironimus repeated again, in detail, his trip west out of what he believed was Willow Creek, then north onto the Bluff Creek Road, a gravel logging road. He filled in the distances between each landmark. As he talked, it dawned on me that Heironimus simply didn't remember the town where he met up with Patterson and Gimlin. Time had eaten away at this particular fact. Heironimus had no maps with him, but had relied solely on Patterson's verbal instructions. "'Turn right before Yreka, follow the highway along the Klamath River, go to Happy Camp, and you'll run right into us. Right as you hit the town on the left is a gas station. You can't miss us.'" I speculated that Heironimus probably remembered "Happy Camp" because it was much more memorable than "Weitchpec." Could he even pronounce Weitchpec? An Indian name, it was difficult to spell, let alone remember. However, what was clear was Heironimus's memory of the *directions* he took when he traveled out of Weitchpec (confused with Willow Creek) to meet Patterson and Gimlin. These particulars had the ring of truth.

"If I could remember more," he said with exasperation. "If it was five years ago, or ten years ago, or fifteen years ago, I'd remember. But I was just a kid. Everything went in one ear and out the other."

However, under my questioning, he accurately recounted again—for the fourth time—his actions on the day he rendezvoused with Patterson and Gimlin.

"Did you manage to find any photos of yourself from 1967?" I asked when he finished.

Bob Heironimus, age twenty-six, circa 1966–1968, in front of his 1962 Corvette. Note his muscular build. Courtesy of Bob Heironimus.

"Yep."

Glenda, who had been listening, left the kitchen and returned with a black-and-white photo of Bob standing in front of a 1962 Corvette. The photo was taken between 1966 and 1968 when he was probably twenty-six. I noticed that Bob's forearms and thighs were prominent and very muscular back then.

"I was a pretty stout guy. I used to lift weights all the time. I was a lot bigger then." This was true. With his obviously large bulk, he was a perfect candidate to wear Patterson's Bigfoot suit. He agreed to loan me the photograph.

I slipped it into a folder. "All right, Bob, we also need to go over your life."

Born in Hartshorn, Missouri, he moved with his family in March, 1947, when he was six, to Tampico where his father, Henry, worked in a hop shed. The Heironimus house (now gone) was the first house on the left-hand side when turning onto the South Fork of the Ahtanum. Later in 1947, the family moved to Grande Ronde, Oregon, so that Henry could pursue logging as a truck driver. In 1948 the family moved back to Tampico where Henry continued to drive a logging truck. Bob entered the Tampico Grade School. There he met Patty Mondor, Roger Patterson's future wife. While he attended Tampico Grade School, "I played with the Mondors," he recalled.

Bob fished and swam in the summers in nearby Ahtanum Creek and played with friends at the rodeo grounds next to Ahtanum Road and across from the Tampico Store.

In 1953 the Heironimus family moved into a house on Ninetieth Avenue in the little village of Ahtanum. Bob attended Ahtanum Valley Elementary School at Wiley City, and then West Valley High School where he played football and was a sprinter and a long jumper on the track team. He graduated from high school in 1959.

In high school and after graduation, Bob's favorite past-time was cars. "I bought hot rods and fixed them up and sometimes sold them," he remembered fondly. "I got a Jeep when I was sixteen. That was the first thing I ever owned. My first car was a '53 Chevy. I put a V-8 motor, transmission, rear end in it, and sold it, and bought a '57 Chevy convertible." He sighed. "I should have kept it. It's worth a buh-zillion dollars now." He rattled on about other cars he owned, which included the 1962 Corvette in the photo he had just loaned me. He also drag-raced cars on Rutherford Road and on a quarter-mile stretch of road near the Yakima Airport. "Then I got interested in rodeo and horses."

Bob bought his first horse about 1965. He bought a one-ton Chevy truck to haul horses, and he started rodeoing and specializing in team roping. "I was too big to ride bulls." He made the nonprofit rodeo rounds at Tampico, Wiley City, Bickleton, White Swan, and other local rodeos. He rodeoed in his spare time until he was forty-six. He often rode his horse up in the hills with friends as well.

As far as employment, in the summers as a teenager, he made the rounds of dairy farms from Tampico to Sunnyside to pick up full, ten-gallon milk cans. Mrs. Clarence Thompson drove the truck, and Bob heaved the heavy cans into the back. After graduation, he worked for Washington Fruit and Produce. Then he joined Boise Cascade, where he was working when he became involved with Patterson. Afterward, he worked for a roofing company and then, from 1973 to 1984, for three cattle ranches: Hankins and Johnson Cattle Company, Decker Cattle Farms, and Hansen Fruit and Cattle, of which he was manager of the latter two operations. In 1984 he joined the Noel Corporation, his current employer. His duties have included driving a route truck and bottling Pepsi products. The only time Heironimus could remember being unemployed was two months, between managing the Hansen cattle ranch and working at Noel. Bob's employment told me that he was responsible, disciplined, and hardworking. I reminded myself that he had also been married to one woman, Glenda, for thirty years.

Bob's personal interests included golf, fishing, and traveling to rodeos as a spectator. He planned to retire in two years, at age sixty-two.

As for Glenda, who was fifty-two, she had worked without interruption since high school. After completing business courses in Spokane, she worked for a physicians' clinic in Walla Walla, Washington. After moving to Yakima in 1968, she worked for Providence Hospital for three years; then part time for thirteen years for Casey Family Program (a permanent placement/foster child agency); then one year for the state of Washington Office of Support Enforcement (child support); and currently was in her fourteenth year working for the Washington State Department of Ecology as a lead secretary. The couple had two children, young women aged twenty-three and twenty-eight. The youngest was planning to marry on September 22, 2001; the other was married.

I looked at Bob Heironimus sitting across from me. I couldn't fathom why he, on the verge of retirement after forty years of hard labor, a responsible family man and dedicated husband, would want to bring a potential public nightmare down on the top of his head—and his wife's. I explored this with him.

He reiterated that people had made money off Bigfoot for years. "This Peter Byrne made a living off it," he said, as an example. "Television has promoted it for years. Everybody has made a lot of money off this thing. Wouldn't you be resentful if you were the star of the whole damn thing, and you're not even considered, you're not even mentioned?"

"So the time has simply come—"

"To let it go. I decided a couple of years ago that it's time. Just tell them the truth. Get the thing over with. What the hell. Let Greg Long reveal it."

It was now late afternoon. Bob had spent hours patiently answering my questions. I placed my recorder, pad, and pen in my briefcase. "I still needed to interview anyone who can vouch for your story. This includes character witnesses. And eventually I need to interview Bob Gimlin, Al DeAtley, and Patty Patterson. If Gimlin, DeAtley, or Patty Patterson won't vouch for you, support for your story can only come from your mother, nephew, wife, and your friends. Too bad we don't have the suit, or even part of it." I snapped shut my brief case.

"I wish we did," he said.

As Pat and I stood in the kitchen making motions to leave, the time seemed right to ask Heironimus about why he couldn't remember confessing to friends at the Idle Hour Tavern. "You frequented taverns in the mid-1960s, right?"

"Sure. For a period of time Paul Falon and Howard—my brother—and I lived in a house in Wiley City. We were a stone's throw from the Idle Hour."

"Did you go to the tavern very much after Patterson took his film?"

"Oh, yeah. Lots of times. I was supposed to keep my mouth shut. That's what I was supposed to be paid for. But, you know, after a couple of years, you don't get any money, things kind of leak out."

"Right. So you could have, as a sociable person drinking beer with the guys, said, 'I wore the suit.'"

"I don't think I did," he said flatly.

I gritted my teeth. "When you got back from California, could you have been exhausted?" Checking the atlas, I had calculated that Heironimus's trip home would have taken at least fourteen hours.

"Could have been."

"So you could have gone to the Idle Hour exhausted, with the suit in the trunk of your mother's car, and had beer and told the guys and just not remembered?"

"I don't think I drank any beer."

"That's puzzling."

"It is," he said. "It is."

Tactfully, I suggested that he simply got drunk and thus didn't remember confessing.

His face hardened. "You didn't go to the Idle Hour because you were a drunkard or an alcoholic. It was just a place to go."

"I understand. But you realize that some people are going to find any way they can to attack you. They'll say, 'Oh, Bob Heironimus is a drunk. He spent all his time in taverns getting polluted. Look, he can't even remember confessing to his friends. Why should we believe him?'"

"I know, I know. But we'd do other things at the Idle Hour. Shoot pool. Shuffle board. B.S."

I dropped the subject. I was sensing that he was in denial—he had sworn to Patterson that he wouldn't tell anyone, and his mind simply refused to remember his confession. Unless he had wiped out his memory from drinking that night at the tavern, then denial seemed to be the only explanation for the memory gap. "Well, we need to get going, Bob."

Pat and I gathered up the video equipment in the living room. "Can I take your picture?" Bob asked.

"Sure."

Glenda handed him a small camera.

Bob took our picture. Afterward, I looked at him and his wife standing next to each other in the kitchen doorway. They seemed to be who they were—a calm, happy couple comfortable in the presence of each other, two partners who had come to an understanding after long discussion and were going forward with publishing Bob's story. Try as I had throughout the day to detect any sign of deception in their manner, they appeared to be frank, open, unpretentious, and unassuming. Bob had been cooperative all afternoon. He had addressed every question. He had been honest about his forgetfulness. I reminded myself that over the past month, he had never misled me.

"What will you do if you're sued when you make your story public? Aren't you afraid?" I asked.

"Why would I be afraid if it's the truth?" he said. "I'm telling the complete truth. Why would they sue me?"

I nodded. "Besides, how could anyone prove one way or the other that there's an actual Bigfoot in Patterson's film?" I mused. "It's impossible. There's no material evidence for the existence of Bigfoot. And so far no one has found a carcass or captured one."

We chatted some more, and finally Pat and I said goodbye.

The afternoon was late, and it was getting cold. Puffy clouds like cotton balls hung above Ahtanum Ridge. As I turned onto Ahtanum Road and headed toward Yakima, Pat and I talked.

"Well, it's difficult not to believe him," I said. "He's consistent in his story every time he tells it. Any memory lapses seem to reflect where his mind was at age twenty-six. He was single. For entertainment he rode horses, shot pool, hung around with the guys, drank beer. He was promised a quick thousand bucks just to wear a costume. Was he supposed to think at age twenty-six, 'I'd better remember every tiny detail of my experience with Patterson and the suit. I'd better record everything in a diary—all the dates and times. I'd better draw a map. I'd better take a photograph of the suit. Because in the year 2001 I'll be telling my story to a writer'? Hardly likely."

"I agree," Pat said. She placed a small pillow behind her head on the headrest and leaned back. "You know, when I walked over and stood next to Glenda and Opal, Opal turned to Glenda and said: 'Bob never really told anybody about this? He really kept it to himself all these years?' And Glenda said to her, 'Yes. He hasn't discussed it with anybody.' Glenda then told Opal that she knew about it before she and Bob got married, and it wasn't a big deal to her."

I stopped at a red light. "Really?" I looked over at Pat. "Now that's interesting. So we're now supposed to believe that Bob met Glenda, fell in love with her, and then lied to her about his involvement in Patterson's film—and that he has continued to lie to her for thirty years—*and* on top of that, he's also managed to get his mother and nephew to lie for him—and he's now going to go ahead and risk his retirement plans." I threw my hands up. "It just doesn't make sense. I suppose it's *possible*, but why destroy his relationship with his wife and children? Is he really that greedy?" The light turned green.

"Honey. He's telling the truth."

"*Damn*!" I shouted. "If we only had the suit."

Back in Mill Creek, on Monday morning I returned to the daily grind. On evenings and weekends, I wrote and transcribed tapes.

One evening Pat wheeled around in her chair in the den where we sat working at our computers and said, "Come here and look at this!"

I rolled my chair next to hers. A large image filled her display. I had seen it before, a blowup of the head of Patterson's Bigfoot made from frame 352 of the film. The image was "the look," the striking moment when the Bigfoot shot the little filmmaker a cold, indifferent glance. A Bigfoot organization named BFRO (Bigfoot Research Organization) had posted the image at www.bfro.net/sasketch/patty.html. The site instructed the visitor to click on the image to reveal the true features of the Bigfoot face. Click, and instantly black lines drawn by an artist appeared as an overlay on top of the face, accentuating alleged facial features. Personally, I felt that the artist was using the black lines to *create* features on the face that weren't there, but the little piece of computerized trickery was entertaining.

"Look at that eye," Pat said, tapping the display. "It seems to be reflecting light."

I nudged closer and squinted. I saw the right eye. It was looking at me; the left eye was in shadow . . . or was I looking at a black hole?

I moved my eyes closer to the display. My pulse leaped. "I'll be damned! I never noticed that before."

I detected several white, curved, geometric shapes in the center of the right eye. The shapes were suggestive of the reflectance one sees on a hard, curved surface, such as a ball, when bright light falls on the surface and "bounces" off.

"Interesting how blowing up that frame revealed those tiny details," I commented.

"I'm going to print out a copy of this," Pat said. In a moment "the look" began sliding out of Pat's color printer.

I stared at the eye on the display one more time and then returned to my computer and typed a list of projects I needed to perform to analyze Patterson's film. One was to study the videotape of Bob walking behind his house and then compare what I saw to Patterson's Bigfoot. A comparison might be revealing.

Ever since my investigation began in late 1998, Pat and I had been keeping our eyes open for TV documentaries dealing with the Patterson film. Of those we taped, we viewed them together off and on as the investigation unfolded. We often discussed what the physical actions and appearance of the Bigfoot in the footage were telling us. Now, in early March 2001, my initial interviews with Heironimus were completed, and we viewed the documentaries with fresh eyes.

Then, during a week when Pat was visiting her family in Oregon, I viewed the documentaries once more. I was especially interested in the on-camera statements of the grand old men of Bigfoot letters—Dahinden, Green, and Byrne. I also pored through my files for reproductions of selected images from the footage; these, I thought, might elucidate what I was actually seeing on the footage. After studying my videotape of Heironimus walking, I compared his gait to that of Patterson's Bigfoot. I also related Heironimus's actions at the Bluff Creek film site, as he had described them, to the actions of Patterson's Bigfoot. Also, I reviewed Patterson's actions at the film site and his descriptions of the Bigfoot as reported to the Humboldt *Times Standard* on the evening of October 20. Finally, I collected the old Bigfooters' published statements about what happened during the filming. After many hours of analysis, I drew a conclusion

Pat returned from Oregon, and on the next weekend I announced in the family room: "Pat, I'm tending to believe that Bob wore the Bigfoot suit."

"Well, it's about time!" She closed the cover of her book.

"I want to show you my information and get your opinion. OK?"

"Sure."

I carried in a box packed with material and placed it in front of the TV.

"First," I squatted down next to the box, "how do we know if the footage was even shot on October 20? You've seen this before, but let's look again."

I punched on the TV and shoved a video cassette into the VCR. "You're seeing the clips Patterson and Gimlin shot of each other on horseback with a white, POA pack horse in tow. A total of *three horses*. Notice the fall colors. But, *exactly when* in the fall were these sequences shot? If Heironimus is right, the clips were shot during Patterson and Gimlin's *first trip* down to scout out the film site. Then, the second trip down, Patterson and Gimlin took *only two horses*—or so says Heironimus. Same issue with the Bluff Creek footage. We only have Patterson and Gimlin's word as to when Patterson filmed the Bigfoot. And we know Patterson conned people."

"True." She placed her feet on her footrest.

"Now, let's review Patterson's footage one more time." I removed the cassette and popped in another one that Lund had mailed it to me. I punched PLAY on my remote.

A horizontal black band appeared at the top of the screen. White digits rolled one after the other in a band, counting off fractions of seconds as Patterson's Bigfoot walked.

"The footage is almost sixty seconds long," I said. "There are 952 frames." We gazed at the jerky images. "The Bigfoot covers approximately three hundred feet from the moment Patterson's horse supposedly reared until the film runs out. I've divided the footage in my mind into three parts, or sequences. This first part shows Bigfoot walking away from Patterson at an angle. Watch."

Pat sat up further in her recliner. "I'm game."

I rewound the footage. I punched PAUSE. "OK, we're in part one, and this is frame one, the start of the film. Now, watch." I got on my knees and rested the tip of my ruler on the screen. "Notice. The Bigfoot is standing at attention with its legs together. Just standing. Remember, Patterson said he and Gimlin rode around a fallen tree and surprised the creature, and Patterson's horse reared and fell over and pinned Patterson and mashed the right stirrup onto his foot. Then the horse leaped up, and so did Patterson, and he grabbed his camera from the saddlebag. Yet, the Bigfoot wasn't running away. See. Here in frame one the Bigfoot is just *standing there*."

Pat craned her neck. "Right! Didn't Bob say Patterson told him to 'walk over there,' then Patterson yelled for him to start walking?"

"Exactly. If Bob is telling the truth, that's him, *right there*"—I tapped the ruler on the screen—"waiting to be told to start walking. And now he does." I punched FAST FORWARD, and the footage began advancing a frame at a time. "Notice how immediately Patterson's camera starts moving left, down, right, left, up, down, and so on, blurring some of the images. But if you look carefully, you'll notice from frame two forward we see the Bigfoot's legs *parted*."

"Meaning he's always taking a step," she said.

"Precisely. He's *always walking*. See the V-shaped empty space between the legs? The legs are *always parted*. But in frame one, the Bigfoot is standing at attention. It's legs aren't bent. It's right side is toward Patterson. It's facing forward, just standing. As if waiting. Very suspicious, especially since Patterson said that when he and Gimlin first stumbled upon the creature, the Bigfoot was a mere *twenty-five feet away* from them. Remember, Patterson's horse reared and fell, which must have caused quite a commotion. But does the Bigfoot run away, like a frightened animal? Nope. Just stands there, not moving. Now supposedly. . . . Hold on."

I grabbed a book out of the box, *Big Footprints: A Scientific Inquiry into the Reality of Sasquatch*, written by Washington State University professor Grover Krantz. I thumbed to a map on page 88. The map showed the Bigfoot's and Patterson's movements in bird's-eye view. I crawled over to Pat. "Look. This map shows that the Bigfoot walked away from Patterson—*did not run, mind you*—a distance of one hundred and twelve feet in twenty seconds, stopped, stood still, and waited for Patterson to disentangle himself from his horse, which had *fallen on him*, hurting his foot, grab his camera, and start filming."

"By the way," Pat said, "if his foot was hurt, how could he run so fast? I mean, for a horse to bend a metal stirrup, quite a weight must have fallen on his foot."

"Yeah. And was he *even running* at the beginning of the filming? Bob said he saw Patterson *sitting on his horse* and moving the camera back and forth and up and down. Now, look at this." I crawled to the TV and stopped and rewound the tape.

PAUSE. "OK. Frame one, again. Remember, Bigfoot is standing at attention and waiting. Now. . . ." PLAY. "The Bigfoot starts walking . . . walking . . . and now at five seconds, he's reached the first tree. Now at seven seconds. . . ." PAUSE. "At this point Patterson's camera is pointing *down at the ground.* See? Ninety-eight percent of the frame is white. That's sand."

"Ah." She fixed on the image.

I tapped the tip of the ruler on the whiteness. "It could be at seven seconds Patterson merely dismounted from his horse—*which, remember, had never reared according to Heironimus*—with his camera on in his hand, pointing at the ground."

"Yes. Possibly."

"Anyway, if Bob was walking *away from Patterson*, his back to him, he wouldn't have even seen Patterson dismount his horse."

"That makes sense."

"OK, we continue the footage." PLAY. "Walking . . . walking . . . the Bigfoot walking. Blurry frames as the camera lurches about . . . still blurry. Now *nine seconds!* Still the Bigfoot is walking."

I tracked the jouncing, bobbing Bigfoot image with the tip of the ruler. "Now . . . *ten seconds!* The Bigfoot's bigger now. . . . Patterson seems to be moving closer to a mound of sand. Now eleven seconds. The Bigfoot's reached the second tree. Patterson is supposedly running . . . still running. *Bam!* Thirteen seconds, and we get another white frame; must be a sandbar, his camera must be pointed at the ground. Patterson running . . . still running. Blurry Bigfoot . . . still blurry! And *bam!*" PAUSE, and the footage instantly froze. The counter read a little over fourteen seconds. The out-of-focus Bigfoot stood frozen in mid-stride on the screen.

"End of part one," I said. "Fourteen seconds have passed, and Patterson has gained on the Bigfoot. Notice, Pat, always in part one, *Patterson is rushing* at the creature. The Bigfoot *had to have heard* him rushing him. We know the creature starting walking after frame one, but at no time does Bigfoot *start running away*. Unlike a wild animal, this Bigfoot shows *absolutely no fear*. At the end of part one, Patterson is much closer. In fact, according to this map"—I opened Krantz's book—"Patterson ran one hundred and eight feet in fourteen seconds, all the while filming the Bigfoot. Surely the Bigfoot heard him running."

"I'm curious." Pat got out of her chair and took the ruler from me and laid it beside the frozen Bigfoot image. "About two and five-eighths inches. Now, rewind to the beginning."

REWIND. Frame one. She measured. "Here the Bigfoot image is one and a half inches."

"Hmm." I thought. "At the end of part one the image is twice as big, and Patterson is much closer. Yet the Bigfoot remains cool and collected. Very interesting behavior for a Bigfoot confronting two hunters, one with a rifle, in October, in hunting season." I fast-forwarded to the fourteenth second and paused. "Alright, we start part two."

PLAY. "Walking . . . walking . . . blurry . . . more white sand . . . walking . . . now twenty seconds. The camera has stopped leaping about, we see the Bigfoot clearly, walking. Now Heironimus—if that's him—is turning his waist as he walks. Shoulders follow. He gives 'the look.' It takes two seconds. Now Bigfoot is facing forward . . . still walking. Thirty seconds. Bigfoot enters a stand of trees."

PAUSE. "That's the end of part two. OK, let's look." I rewound to the beginning of part two, the fourteenth second. PAUSE.

Pat sat in her recliner.

"Part two is supposed to be the best part of the footage," I said. "The old Bigfooters and Patterson have said"—I counted on my fingers—"'First, no human can walk like Patterson's Bigfoot. Second, the Bigfoot's arms are longer than a human's. Third, the feet are unusually large and can't be human. Fourth, the head is like an ape's. Fifth, the Bigfoot turns and looks at Patterson like an ape would. Sixth, the Bigfoot is *really big*, and in fact, it could be more than seven feet tall.' All right, let me tell you what I see in part two."

I played over and over part two, starting at the fourteenth second and ending at the thirtieth second. All the while, I told Pat what I was seeing. I invited her to comment.

"The Bigfoot's gait," I said. "Notice the Bigfoot lifts each foot up high behind him as he takes each step. Why? Because you would, too, if you had extra-large feet, or wore fourteen- to eighteen-inch-long slippers walking on uneven ground out in the woods, and on sand! You wouldn't want to trip over your own large feet, would you?"

Pat's eyes narrowed as she peered. "Hmm. And the Bigfoot is also putting its heel *down first* as it walks."

"Absolutely! And that's what Bob does. I'll show you." STOP. I replaced the cassette with the Heironimus footage. PLAY. I jabbed at his feet with the ruler. "See, he walks on his heels. *Just like the Bigfoot in Patterson's footage!*"

"I see it!"

"And of course his knees are bent. And look at the swing of his arms. See how he's swinging them back further than usual?"

"Yes! And he's keeping his fingers together and his palms open. He's not curling or balling his fingers up the way most people do when they walk. That way his arm looks longer."

"I never noticed that before," I said. "The palms *are* open and his fingers *are* outstretched. Put thick, long gloves on them, and his arms would look even longer. You know, Bob does have thirty-five-inch sleeves, and he's only slightly over six feet. His arms are long for his height." A thought suddenly came to mind. "And you know. . . ."

REWIND. Then FAST FORWARD. I paused on the best frame in part two that showed Bigfoot's swinging right arm extended in front of him. I grunted as I pushed myself to my feet. "Look, Pat, if I bend my knees like so and slouch over some, my hands are closer to my knees, and so my arms look longer because my legs are quote-unquote, 'shorter.'"

"You're right!"

"The lesson is: Bend your knees and you can make your arms look longer. Now, I want you to listen to Grover Krantz on this documentary." Krantz, the Washington State University anthropology professor, had studied Bigfoot casts for thirty years.

EJECT. I placed Patterson's footage on the floor and popped *X Creatures* into the VCR. This documentary was produced by Chris Packham of Great Britain and repeatedly broadcast on the Discovery Channel in 1999 and 2000. FAST FORWARD. I paused on a sequence where a grizzled Krantz, wearing a white beard and a tan fishing cap and standing on a plaza on the Washington State University campus, commented on the Bigfoot gait in Patterson's film. The Bigfoot's knees are "largely bent," he intoned as he commented on what he saw in Patterson's film. "The body of the Bigfoot leans forward and walks heels first, its legs being supported by its bent knees. It keeps its two feet on the ground for an unusual length of time and also lifts the foot high behind each step like so." Krantz began demonstrating "the walk." I could hear children laughing in the background on the tape. "It also swings the arms, which is very difficult to imitate," Krantz added. And with that Krantz walked about twenty paces with his knees bent and his arms swinging and his feet plodding down, heel first. Puffing, he came to a halt and said, "Bigfoot did it for over three hundred feet. I doubt that any human being could be trained to do that."

I burst into hilarious laughter. "The professor just demonstrated the Heironimus 'Bigfoot walk'! Anybody can do it with a few pointers. Bob Heironimus did it at age twenty-six, and he did it for me at nearly age sixty! Trained? Are you kidding me. Watch me!" And I simulated the walk, striding throughout the house. "Go, Bigfoot, *go!*" Pat shouted, walking behind me.

I tramped into to the family room. “OK, I’ve got another video.”

I stooped and removed *Sasquatch Odyssey* from my box. I popped it into the VCR. I fast-forwarded to a sequence where Dahinden was being interviewed. He, too, demonstrated “the walk.” “The body is leaning forward . . . ,” Dahinden said, “. . . you poot foot down and the veight comes on it . . . you bend your knees . . . the muscle masses moving.”

“Speaking of muscle masses. . . .” I knelt on the floor. EJECT. “I don’t see any muscle masses moving on Patterson’s Bigfoot. What I *do see* looks like raggedy fur all over the Bigfoot’s body catching the light. No muscles. It’s all light and shadow causing *the illusion* of muscles.”

I pushed the video of Patterson’s footage into the VCR. I fast-forwarded to part two and found the ten best seconds of the Bigfoot walking. “Look closely. You can see the fur or skin on the Bigfoot is a lighter color from the chest down to the waist. But see. . . .” I struck the screen with my ruler. “Starting at the waist and *moving down* onto the hips and the upper thighs, the fur is thicker. Simply put, one part of the Bigfoot is furrier than the other part. Like there were two separate parts that joined at the waistline, which would explain why we see that visible line, right there, at the waist. That’s where the two parts connect.”

“I see that,” Pat said. “And I bet after Bob put the suit on, Patterson brushed or combed the fur in an attempt to blend the fur together to make the suit *look like* one piece.”

“Good point. Now, I want you to study ‘the look.’” ADVANCE. Then PAUSE. “OK, we’re at twenty-three seconds into the footage and at frame 352. The Bigfoot is supposedly one hundred and two feet from Patterson. In this frame, the Bigfoot has twisted his shoulders, and he’s shooting Patterson ‘the look.’ Now, I want to compare this frame to that image you printed out a few weeks ago.”

“The blowup of the head?”

“Right.” I fished into my box and pulled out a folder that contained the color printout of the blowup of “the look.” “You remember this?” I handed the printout to her.

She looked at the image. “Yes.”

“Notice the Bigfoot has a white nose, and there’s a patch of white on the upper portion of the cheeks near the eyes.”

“I see that.”

“Notice that we can clearly see the right eye. And notice it’s brown. Of course, Bob’s eyes are brown. By the way, I searched the Internet, and did you know that apes’ eyes are always brown? Lucky Patterson. He chose the right guy to play Bigfoot—brown-eyed Bob Heironimus.”

I pulled out another folder. “Now listen to this.” I quoted from the Humboldt *Times Standard* news article that first reported Patterson and Gimlin’s sighting on October 21, 1967. “‘Patterson said the creature’s head was much like a human’s though considerably more slated [*sic*: slanted] and with a large forehead and broad, wide nostrils.’”

I pointed to the white nose on the printout in Pat's hands. "That nose *right there* does *not* have 'broad, wide nostrils'! *Absolutely does not!* Besides, how could Patterson have detected 'broad, wide nostrils' on this face at a distance of one hundred and two feet in two seconds? *Impossible!* Gimlin made a similar remark. When Green interviewed him on video in 1992, Gimlin said that the nose of the Bigfoot was 'flat.' And most incredible, he said that when he and Patterson saw the Bigfoot, 'we could see its teeth.' In fact, in an article published in the *Seattle Times* on October 26, 1967, Gimlin said he saw 'the white gleam of the creature's teeth.' Idiotic. Show me gleaming, white teeth in Patterson's film! The mouth was never open. And the nose *isn't flat.*"

I paused to calm myself. "Something else. The nose looks like Heironimus's. Look at the Bigfoot's nose and then compare it to Heironimus's nose." I handed her a blowup of Heironimus's face.

Pat compared the two noses. "They *do* look similar."

"See, right there," I pointed, "the crown of the Bigfoot's head is somewhat peaked, like the sagittal crest of an ape. But the nose, cheeks, and eyes are human-looking. It's as if Patterson wanted to make certain that the Bigfoot had just enough human features to link it to man, but then to make it appear apelike everywhere else, you know, the bulk in the buttocks and the shoulders, the loose-kneed walk, the accentuated swinging of the arms. Of course, Patterson convinced quite a few people. Or I should say they decided to *let themselves* be convinced. For instance, Krantz believes Patterson's Bigfoot is a type of ape." I ejected the Patterson footage. "Remember this A&E TV documentary called *Bigfoot*?" I held it up.

"Uh-huh."

I pushed in the cassette. Produced in 1994 and narrated by Leonard Nimoy, the documentary features a sequence wherein Krantz comments on "the look." ADVANCE. "Here's Krantz," I said. "Listen."

Pat perked up.

Krantz was speaking: "One of the things it [Patterson's Bigfoot] did when it turned that was rather interesting is that it turned its head and chest at the same time, very much like an ape does." Krantz went on to say that when a human being turns its head, the jaw passes over the shoulders. However, an ape has a "much deeper jaw, like this," and Krantz scrunched his head and neck down to look as if he had no neck. "When the ape turns to the side, its jaw runs into its shoulder," and Krantz demonstrated this effect. For an ape to look to the side, explained Krantz, it must "tip its head way back over the shoulder," or "turn its head and shoulders" at the same time. Therefore, Krantz concluded, because the Bigfoot in Patterson's film turned its head and shoulders at the same time, it must be an apelike creature.

STOP. EJECT. "OK, keep in mind what Krantz just said, and now take another look at the Bigfoot as it turns to look at Patterson."

I poked Patterson's footage into the VCR. REWIND. PLAY. "Here it comes," I announced. "Walking . . . walking . . . ," I narrated. "Still walking . . . now the Bigfoot begins to turn . . . turns its shoulders and head at the same time, and looks!" PAUSE on "the look." "The Bigfoot looked just like a human would look. Watch."

I stood up. "First, I bend my knees and slouch forward. Then I start walking, heel first."

I began striding back and forth like the Bigfoot from the family room into the living room. "How am I doing?"

She was following me. "Swing your arms a little further back!"

"Better?"

"That's it!"

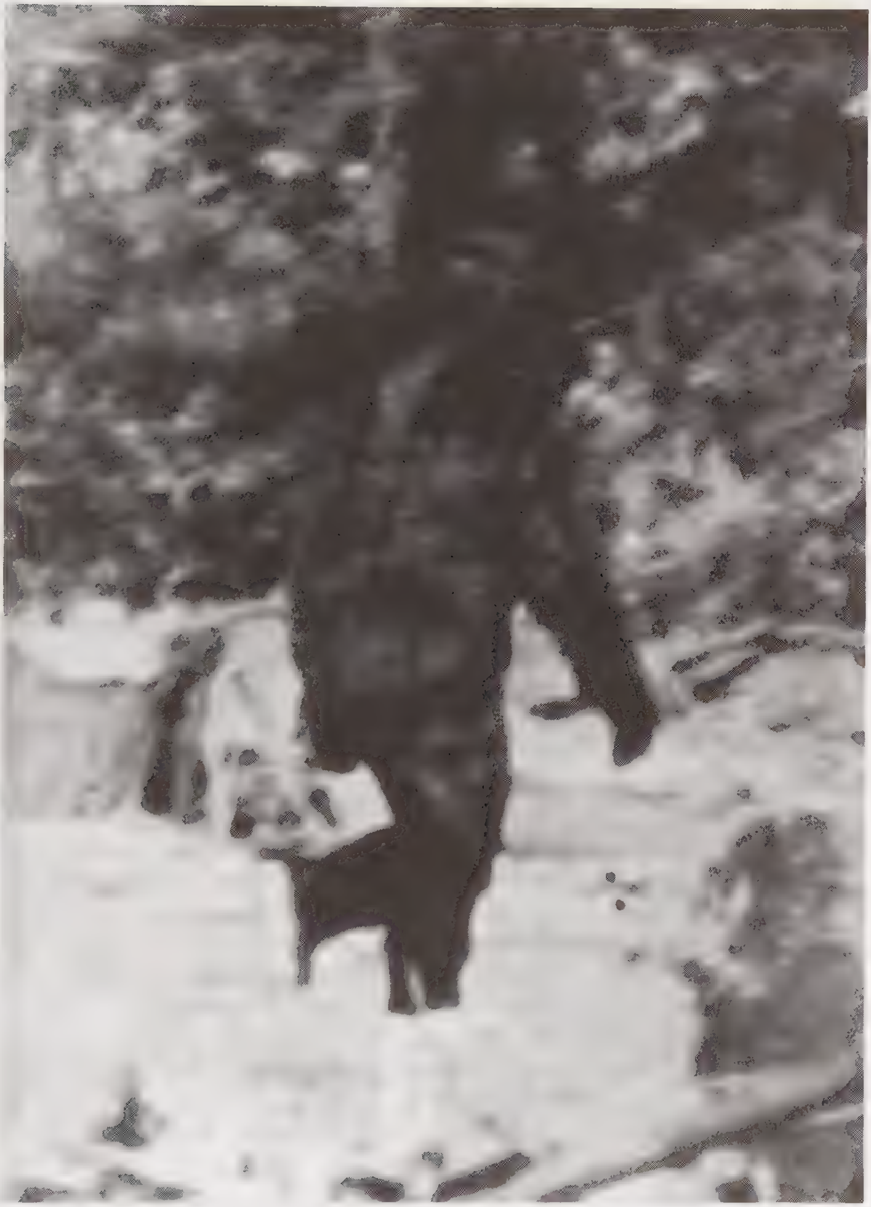
"Go back and stand next to the dining room table," I ordered. I strode into the living room and turned around. "Here I come! I'm going to give you 'the look.'" I trudged into the dining room. As I walked by Pat, I turned my waist, shoulders, and head to the right and stared at her. "I just looked at you like the Bigfoot!"

"Good!" she yelled.

Then I quickly returned to my normal, forward-walking position and sauntered into the family room where I sank into the sofa, puffing.

Pat sat down in her recliner.

Frame 61 of Patterson's Bigfoot film, showing the right foot of the "creature." Note that the arch of the foot appears to be on the wrong side of the foot. The backside of the Bigfoot suit is also sagging.



Frame 323 of the film reveals the left foot of the "Bigfoot." The left foot has no visible arch compared to the right foot in frame 61. The left foot is rectangular in shape and resembles a slipper. The foot appears to be attached to a boot. Notice the glove on the right hand.

I said, "The lesson here is that a human being, while walking, can turn his head and shoulders by twisting at the waist. You don't have to be an ape to do it. Therefore, Krantz's so-called logic doesn't hold. How does he know that the Bigfoot in Patterson's film isn't just a man in a costume, and that that man turned and looked at Patterson just like any man could? I just proved that I can do everything that the Bigfoot does in the film, and I'm a man. Therefore, I could put on a Bigfoot costume and do exactly what the Bigfoot does in the film!"

"And don't forget the feet," Pat reminded me.

"Right. The feet." I removed from the box blowups of frames 61 and 323, which had appeared in newspaper articles.

"Tell me what you see in frame sixty-one," I said.

Frame sixty-one, in the early seconds of part one of the footage when the Bigfoot is walking away from Patterson, shows the Bigfoot stepping over a log. The Bigfoot's left leg and left foot have already passed over the log; the right leg is in the process of being lifted over the log—the right knee is bent and the bottom of the right foot is visible. I handed Pat the blowup.

Pat pored over the blowup. "Well, I told you once before. The arch of the foot, rather than being on *the side of the foot where the big toe is*, where it should be, is on the *opposite* side."

"True. Now, look again at frame 323." This frame, in part two of the footage, shows the Bigfoot lifting its left foot. I handed her the blowup.

"Well. . . ." Pat studied it. "I see a foot that's rectangular in shape. It doesn't even have an arch like the right foot does. Also, hair—if that's what that is—is growing all along the side of the foot in a clean, straight line and on the back on the heel. It reminds me of the feet that were sewn on the bottoms of those one-piece pajamas that my boys wore in the 1970s. Cloth formed the top, sides, and back of the pajama feet, but the bottoms of the feet were made from a white, vinyl-type material. See the way the heel protrudes at the back of the foot and the Achilles heel area juts sharply in? It's like a pajama foot. It's artificial looking."

"Yeah." I took the blowups from Pat and sat down next to her recliner. "If Bob is right, Patterson cut the rubber feet off a pair of wading boots and sewed two big slippers onto the ends of the boots." I began closely viewing the feet on the blowups. "Problem is the feet of the Bigfoot don't even *look* the same. Maybe that's because when Bob walked in the slippers, which must have been soft, maybe made of vinyl or rubber, the slippers changed shape."

"And look at the waistline," Pat said. "I see what looks like a fold."

I nodded. I had studied the same fold many times before. In both frames 61 and 323, the Bigfoot is walking away from the viewer, shoulders forward, head down, waist bent, with most of the creature's back facing Patterson's camera. One can see, clearly visible on the Bigfoot's lower back, a prominent, upward-thrusting, curved space forming a uniformly dark area in the creature's fur. The shape of the curved space is a rounded arch. In fact, the color of the rounded arch is a very dark brown, indicative of a concave depression in the Bigfoot's fur. What looks like a fold in the fur or "hide" runs right along the top edge of the arch.

"That curved, shadowy area suggests that the lower back of the Bigfoot is sagging at the waistline," Pat said, looking at the blowup over my shoulder.

"Yes. And maybe the fold at the top of that curved shadow marks where the lower half of the suit is attached to the corset. Also, look at how the lower portion of the buttocks appears to be sagging."

"It's as if Patterson made the butt too large and it hung down," Pat said. "I just remembered. I visited my cousin Maxine in Jefferson, Oregon, in the 1960s. She walked out into the living room wearing big slippers. They looked like human feet."

"Really?"

"Yes." She thought back. "It was probably the fall of 1964. The slippers were covered with hair, and they had human-looking toes."

"Very interesting." I picked up the remote control. "OK. I want to show you part three." I fast-forwarded to the thirtieth second of Patterson's footage. PAUSE. "Here's where the Bigfoot enters the stand of trees." PLAY. "Walking . . . now vanishing into the trees . . . lots of camera jiggle, as usual. OK . . . keep looking. . . ."

Pat leaned forward.

"Here comes the Bigfoot," I narrated. "More jiggle . . . blurry . . . but keep an eye on the image. If you look carefully, you'll see that the Bigfoot is now standing erect, not looking down at the ground."

"I see it!" she said.

"And it's walking slowly, and it's not swinging its arms as dramatically."

"I do see it!"

REWIND. PLAY. "Look again. See, see! He's walking as if to say, 'Job done. Roger got what he wanted. So I'll just slow down now and take it easy.'"

I re-ran the footage over and over. Yes, it was undeniable. The Bigfoot was standing *taller* in part three of the footage than in part two and was walking almost nonchalantly with a more human gait, pronounced and unmistakable. The creature's relaxed, natural walk reminded me of a human being who had left a stage, like an actor returning to the real world now that he had finished his role in a scene. It was as if the actor believed he was out of sight of Patterson's camera—although in this case the actor was unaware that the camera was still tracking him. EJECT. I put all the videos we had watched back into the box and slid it in front of the sofa. I pushed myself up and sat down on the soft cushions.

"Another item," I said. "The Bigfoot's height. Byrne and Dahinden say the Bigfoot is supposed to be 6'5" tall. Krantz says the Bigfoot is between 6'0" and 6'6". Nine months after Patterson shot the film, Green and Jim McClarin traveled to the film site. McClarin was the Bigfoot hunter who traveled to Yakima with Dahinden to look at Patterson's footage on October 22. McClarin was 6'5" tall. Anyway, Green filmed McClarin walking along the same path the Bigfoot took.

Then Green compared his film with Patterson's. By lining up the two images—the Bigfoot and McClarin—Green concluded that the Bigfoot was a little taller than McClarin. So again, the Bigfoot was well within normal human limits, not seven feet tall. If you remember, Patterson told Byrne a few years after the filming that the Bigfoot was 7'4", even though his initial estimate as reported in the *Times Standard* article was 6'6" up to 7'0". Ridiculous." I leaned my head on the back of the sofa.

I continued. "We know Heironimus is 6'¼" tall. Skeptics will say, 'Aw, he can't be the Bigfoot. He's too short.' But when you put a helmet on his head and cover the helmet with fur—and the fur sticks up like the sagittal crest of an ape—Heironimus would probably be about 6'5". Besides, did McClarin walk precisely on the same spot as the Bigfoot? I doubt it. A person looks shorter or taller to a viewer depending on how far away or close that person is from the viewer. I think Heironimus is an excellent candidate to have played the Bigfoot."

I reached into the box at my feet. "OK. We've considered the Bigfoot's feet, gait, swinging arms, face, 'the look,' and height. Each of those aspects can either be performed by a human or fabricated as part of a costume. Oh, and if weight is an issue, just build a suit with bulk to it. Now, I want you to listen to something that's very, very interesting."

I lifted out Green's book *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*. "Remember when Patterson visited Green and collected newspaper stories for his book?" I said.

"Uh-huh," Pat said.

"Well, one of those stories was the William Roe story." I turned to the story in Green's book. "Supposedly, Roe had been working on a highway near Tete Jaune Cache—however you pronounce it—in British Columbia, and he decided one day in October, 1955, to climb up Mica Mountain to see an old deserted mine. He brought his rifle along, just in case a wild animal attacked him. He came upon the mine about three o'clock in the afternoon, and just as he walked out of some brush into a clearing, he saw what he first thought was a bear partially hidden in the brush on the other side of the clearing. He didn't want to shoot it, so he sat down on a rock with his rifle in his hands and just looked at the animal. Well, the animal stood up and started walking across the clearing toward him. The animal looked like a huge man. It was covered from head to foot with dark brown, silver-tipped hair. And, get this—*it had breasts*."

"Really?"

"Yeah. It's arms reached almost to its knees. Green published Roe's story in his book along with a drawing of the creature."

I read. "Roe said, 'When it walked it placed the heel of its foot down first, and I could see the grey-brown skin or hide on the soles of its feet.' Sound familiar?"

"Yes!"

"So this creature comes to within twenty feet of Roe and squats down on its haunches and reaches out and pulls branches toward its mouth and strips off the leaves with its teeth. Roe just sits there and studies it. Convenient, huh? The Bigfoot is within *twenty feet* of Roe and it doesn't turn and run away. Remember how Patterson and Gimlin rode their horses around the fallen tree? Well, they were within *twenty-five feet* of the Bigfoot. Roe's Bigfoot had the typical features you'd expect—broad, flat nose; slanted head; small, black eyes; thick, short neck. And get this, there were *bare parts* around the ear, nose, and mouth of Roe's Bigfoot. Patterson's Bigfoot had *a bare nose and bare upper cheeks*."

"Interesting," Pat said, sitting up straight.

"Very. Now, listen to this statement of Roe: 'As I watched this creature, I wondered if some movie company was making a film at this place and that what I saw was an actor, made up to look partly human and partly animal.'"

"Ha, ha!" Pat laughed.

I chuckled. "OK, there's more. The Bigfoot finally catches Roe's scent. It looks and sees Roe and backs up three or four steps in a crouched position, and then straightens up and walks back rapidly the way it had come. Roe thinks about shooting it. That way he'd have a specimen to show scientists. 'I leveled my rifle,' he writes. 'The creature was still walking rapidly away, again turning its head to look in my direction.' It gives Roe *a look, eh?* Anyway, the creature reaches the brush on the other side of the clearing and throws its head back and emits a kind of whinny, and then it walks into a stand of pine. Sound familiar? Remember that Patterson's Bigfoot walks into a group of trees. The next time Roe sees the Bigfoot, it's walking on a ridge. It laughs one more time and then vanishes." I closed Green's book.

"That's really *quite a coincidence*," Pat said and shook her head in amazement.

"Was it a coincidence? Because listen to this." I fished out of the box the *Times Standard* story. "According to the *Times Standard*, Patterson told the reporter that the Bigfoot he saw had 'silvery brown hair.' Roe's Bigfoot had '*dark brown, silver-tipped hair.*' Roe estimated that the creature he saw was seven feet tall and weighed five hundred pounds. Patterson said his Bigfoot was between six-and-a-half feet to seven feet tall and weighed between three hundred and fifty to four hundred pounds. So, let's review this odd 'coincidence.'"

I counted off on my fingers "One, according to Byrne, Patterson comes upon a Bigfoot *squatting down* near the creek. Roe's creature *squats down*. Two, Patterson's creature *walks across a clearing*. So does Roe's. Three, Patterson's creature has *breasts*. So does Roe's. Four, Roe's creature has *long arms*. So does Patterson's Bigfoot. Five, Roe's creature *walks on its heels*. So does Patterson's. Six, both creatures have *brown, silver-tipped hair*, as I mentioned. Seven, both creatures have *bare skin on their faces*, as I mentioned. Eight, both creatures *turn and look at their observers as they're walking away*. Nine, Roe *has a rifle* and thinks about shooting the Bigfoot, but doesn't. Gimlin has a rifle, but doesn't shoot. Ten, both creatures *vanish into trees*." I tossed the article on the cushion next to me. "An amazing set of similarities I would say. In fact, so amazing I'd say this is where Patterson came up with his 'script' for his film, so to speak."

"Think so?"

"Why not? Remember, one of Patterson's consistent habits was using other people's money and resources. And he was a good observer and an artist. He probably borrowed Roe's story and made it his own. Why wouldn't he?"

Pat's eyes were wide with excitement. "Well, it makes a great deal of sense."

"And one of the most important things is this. Isn't it interesting that Patterson goes down to Bluff Creek with a sixteen-millimeter motion picture camera because there's an outside chance that he might stumble onto a Bigfoot and actually film one? And yet the day he and Gimlin ride up the logging road, he's only got a minute's worth of film left in his camera. Now, isn't that stupid? Here's this Bigfoot hunter, he's been at it since the early 1960s. He's even published a book on Bigfoot. He's even producing a Bigfoot documentary. And he has this opportunity—and maybe this only *one opportunity*—to see and film a Bigfoot which he can put into his documentary. *The chance of a lifetime.* But instead of checking his movie camera to see how much film he has, he rides up the logging road with a camera that's almost out of film. As a result, he's only able to capture sixty seconds of the Bigfoot. Without more film footage in his camera, he can't leap on his horse and chase after the Bigfoot and film some more. It would take too long to change the reel to a fresh one. By that time, the Bigfoot would be long gone. *All very convenient.* A short, tantalizing snippet of film. It's blurry. The camera's almost always shaking. But then luckily the camera settles down so we can see fairly clearly the Bigfoot. The Bigfoot looks, and then the camera starts shaking again. Part two is the only time we get a good look at the creature. But generally the film is crap. It's almost as if it's designed to give you just enough to make you wonder. But I'm not wondering anymore." I shook my head. "Well, that's it. I'm tired. End of analysis."

"And so what do you conclude?"

I yawned. "I conclude that that's no Bigfoot in Patterson's film. It's a man in a suit. It *could be* Heironimus."

"I'm convinced it's Heironimus."

"Well, you know," I said, "if we had thousands and thousands of dollars, along with the original film or a good duplicate of the film, we could pay highly experienced digital photo analysts to process and analyze the film. They could enhance all 952 frames, filter them, clean them up, tear them apart, and put them back together, blow up every feature, however minuscule, then recompile the film and use techniques to remove any camera shake. And they could do all that while working with primatologists and biomechanical engineers who would study the tiniest details in the images. And who knows what other scientists you could get involved to scrutinize the film piece by piece. But is that even necessary? It's obvious from my analysis alone that anyone can duplicate the Bigfoot's walk, and with a slightly above-average artistic ability you could build a suit like that. Hell, Heironimus has already told us pretty much how to do it. Anyway, without the actual suit of course, which supposedly Patterson designed and built, skeptics would reject anybody's analysis, amateur or scientist. You could spend a hundred thousand dollars performing high-tech analysis on the film to prove it's a man in a suit, but you wouldn't get anywhere. They'd say, 'Produce the suit.' They'd say, 'So what if Patterson conned people. Nobody's perfect. It's the film that counts.' No matter what Bob Heironimus says or I write about Patterson's crooked behavior, *the believers will still believe.*" This time I let out a long, wailing yawn. "Shall we call it a night?"

"Yes. It's good you can sleep in tomorrow."

Weeks passed, and in early April, as Pat and I began searching for a landscaper to improve the property around our new home, any lingering doubts I had about Patterson's honesty vanished like early morning mist under a warming sun. With Patterson's reputation as an honest Bigfoot photographer in mounting disrepute in my mind, my confidence in the truth of Heironimus's confession grew.

It started when I stumbled across a reminder in my "tickle file" to call Duane Anderson. I had gotten a lead on Anderson from Doug Lemon who had answered my ad in the *Yakima Herald* when I asked witnesses who knew Patterson to call me. Lemon had told me that supposedly Duane Anderson's brother Harvey had information that Patterson was a hoaxer.

I soon had a slow-talking, elderly Duane Anderson on the phone. The moment I asked him if he could put me in touch with his brother, he started reminiscing about his own experience with Patterson. Sometime between 1960 and 1963, he recollected, Patterson and another man entered Anderson's Camera and Sport Shop located in a building at 110 North Second Street in Yakima. In those years, the shop was owned and operated by the Anderson brothers and their father. Duane ran the photo-finishing lab on the second floor; the gun shop was on the first floor where Harvey and his father worked.

"Roger used to frequent our shop quite often," Duane said. "I think he bought some cameras from us."

On this day, Patterson entered the shop to drop off some rolls of film. "If I remember the story, Roger told me he was camping up behind Rimrock Lake up at Section 3 Lake, and he was surprised by this Bigfoot, and he took photographs of it."

"No kidding?" I said, taken by surprise. I never knew that Patterson had been using a camera so early in his Bigfoot "career." In fact, Patterson had supposedly made his first Bigfoot cast only in 1964 at Bluff Creek. A year later he visited Green to collect newspaper stories for his book, printed it in '66, began his documentary in late spring/early summer '67, and lo and behold, filmed an actual Bigfoot in October '67. *Why hadn't he ever reported this first early sighting and his photographs?* Something didn't seem right.

"Again, when was it that Patterson visited your shop?"

I waited intently for his answer.

After a few moments, he said, "Now that I think about it more, I think it was before the fire that burned the building in the fall of 1961. I started the photo-finishing lab in 1960. I'd almost swear that Roger told me when I took the film from him that he and some of his buddies were up there backpacking with horses. He was on his way to Goat Rocks, and he saw Bigfoot."

"When he handed the rolls to you, did he say, 'I've taken some pictures of Bigfoot?'"

"I'm not sure. It may have been I made the prints, and then he . . ." He dug into his memory for a moment. "I commented about what looked like a big, old gorilla or something. He said that was a Bigfoot he had taken photographs of."

"Do you remember who the man was with Roger?"

"No. That's about all I can tell you. It's been a long time. I'm sure Harvey can tell you about Roger."

Anderson gave me Harvey's phone number. I thanked Anderson, hung up, and sat back in my chair, stumped. Who had accompanied Patterson into Anderson's lab? I knew two early acolytes of Patterson were Rod Thornton and Prentis Beck. I now knew that Patterson was frequently visiting the Andersons' shop and dealing with camera equipment and film. Something seemed suspicious.

On April 8, 2001, I phoned Harvey Anderson. He answered on his cell phone. "I know who you're talking about," he said immediately when I explained the reason for my call, Patterson. "I remember it very well. He rented a sixteen-millimeter magazine camera made by Revere out of Chicago." Then he told me a story. I latched onto his every word, my pen flying across the page, my mind reeling. I knew I needed a long interview with him. "I'm at a shopping center now with my wife," Anderson said, "so we're a little busy at the moment. But you can call me at my home number."

Each digit of the phone number burned into my brain as I hastily wrote it down.

I lay down my pen and strode out to the living room, my heart racing, my thoughts soaring like a flock of wild birds that just took flight at the sound of a shotgun blast. Pat was watering plants. "Wait 'til you hear this," I said.

"Really?" she said after I finished, her watering can falling limp in her hands.

Two days later I reached Harvey Anderson by phone at his house. "I don't mind being taped," he said in gritty, deep tones. "But I would like to read what you actually print."

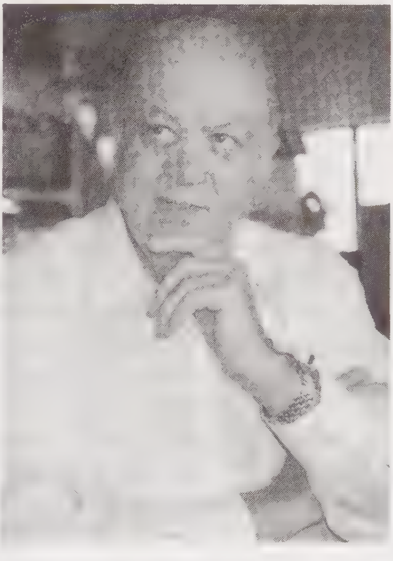
"Agreed," I said, poised to hear his story. I threw the switch on the taping system and lifted my coffee cup to my lips. With the tape recorder rolling, for the next two hours Anderson told me a most astonishing story about Patterson and his motives for searching for Bigfoot. During those hours, I worked on his memory and subjected his statements to checks and rechecks. In the end, the story rang true. Why, I asked myself, when I hung up, would this seventy-three-year-old businessman concoct such a story, especially when I had called him out of the blue? In my mind, all shreds of doubt that Patterson's Bluff Creek film depicted a real Bigfoot had now evaporated.

22

THE DEATH OF A LEGEND

Roger believed in Bigfoot. I'm a little concerned that he became involved in the fact that, "I got to prove it even though I've got to cheat, lie, and steal to do it."

—**Al DeAtley**



Harvey Anderson, former owner of a Yakima camera store, met Roger Patterson in 1961. Patterson bought a motion picture camera from Anderson to photograph a "giant." Later, Patterson admitted to Anderson that he was a hoaxer. Photo by Pat Long.

A native of Idaho, Harvey Anderson moved with his family to Yakima at age five. After a ten-year career in the Navy, he left the service in 1955 at age twenty-seven. After he returned to Yakima, he went into business with his father selling guns in 1956. After eighteen months of managing a gun shop on West Walnut Avenue, the two men opened a new shop at 110 North Second Street. Harvey's brother Duane joined the business and opened a film lab in the shop. One day Roger Patterson walked in. Harvey believed it was before the fire that ravaged the store in the fall of 1961.

"I hadn't met Patterson before," Anderson recalled. "He was a short fellow, sort of quiet, more or less to himself. There are lots of farmers around Yakima, and he didn't look like a person who would be buying a motion picture camera. He asked me about the type of camera he would need to do a movie of some wildlife. I said, 'Well, it depends upon what you have in mind.'" He explained to Patterson the pros and cons of eight-millimeter and sixteen-millimeter movie cameras. Then Patterson left.

A few days later Patterson returned to gather more details. Anderson attempted to interest him in a sixteen-millimeter Bolex. Patterson balked at the price; he wanted a camera that was "very cheap, but reliable and good." Well, Anderson said, then he should consider a sixteen-millimeter Revere motion picture magazine-type camera from Chicago. They were inexpensive since Revere was discontinuing the line, and Anderson had bought quite a few at a fraction of their cost. The light-brown, leather-colored camera was available in either single or dual turret. The dual turret could hold either one or two lenses—twenty-five-millimeter and/or seventy-five-millimeter. Anderson suggested Patterson buy the dual turret model, and he encouraged him to buy a seventy-five-millimeter lens, much better for shooting wildlife. Anderson could sell the camera to Patterson for sixty-nine dollars. "How much can I rent it for?" asked Patterson. "Fifteen dollars a day," replied Anderson. Patterson left the store.

A day or two later, perhaps Wednesday, Patterson visited a third time. Pressed under his arm was a newspaper-wrapped package with string tied around it.

Anderson remembered Patterson walking up to the counter. "He said, 'I have something private I want to show you so that I can figure out if I can make this film correct.' I said, 'Sure.' He says, 'Well, can we go into the back room?'

"So I took him into the back of the shop where we serviced and repaired guns, and he lay the package on a work bench and took the string off and unfolded the newspaper, and he had a white cast of what appeared to be something like a foot. He says, 'What do you think of that?' I said, 'Well, what is it?' He said, 'Well, it's from a walking man I have found out in the Ahtanum area.' And I said, 'Is that right?' I didn't think he was serious, but he acted serious. I looked at the cast a couple of minutes."

As he did so, Anderson's impression was that Patterson had constructed a model of a human foot from plaster; it was about twenty inches long. The heel and back portion of the foot was about six inches wide; the front of the foot was about an inch wider. Patterson described the "walking man" to Anderson as a "giant man."

"It wasn't a cast of a footprint," Anderson said. "You get a *footprint* only if you find a print of a foot in the mud and take a cast of it. So I knew it [the plaster foot] was something he was manufacturing. I said to him, 'It looks like it's *too narrow* on the front part because it [the "walking man"] couldn't stand erect. Based on the description you've given me of this tall man or tall animal, you have to have it *broader* at the ball of the foot.' 'Oh, no,' he said, 'he stands right up.' I said, 'Well, it doesn't appear to be correct. It looks to me like it should be wider on the front where the ball of the foot is. For the length of the foot, it won't work.' He said, 'Well, I can solve that problem. I'll take some more casts.'"

Three days later, on a Saturday, Patterson returned. Anderson was busy with customers, but Patterson patiently waited for twenty minutes. When Anderson was free, Patterson revealed another package, this one wrapped in brown paper. As before, the two men retired to the back of the shop.

"He unfolded the paper, and he said, 'What do you think of that?'"

Lying on the paper was a white plaster foot like the first one, but the ball of this foot was about three inches wider and the heel was half the size as the first foot. Anderson's impression was that Patterson had made the foot by pouring plaster into a mold.

"I said, 'That looks better. That looks proportionate.' He said, 'That's good. OK. So you think that would be alright?' I said, 'That's a heck of a lot better.' See, I did not know the guy, did not know his intention. You have to realize that people came in and out of the store all the time. You don't know them. You just wait on them and service their needs. I thought he was pulling a joke on somebody.

"The white cast had some impurities in it. It wasn't real professional, and it wasn't perfectly formed. There were pieces of weeds in the plaster and what looked like carving marks on the sides where he had shaved off pieces of plaster, trimmed up the foot, maybe with a pocket knife, to make it appear a little bit more professional. I think he had carved on the cast after he had taken it out of its formation."

Patterson wrapped up the foot in the brown paper. Patterson wanted more information about camera equipment. Anderson explained that in addition to the camera, he'd need a light meter to set the f-stop on the lens, a tripod to stabilize the camera (critical when shooting a walking or running creature) and film with the correct sensitivity to light conditions, daylight or night.

Patterson asked to look at a camera, and Anderson took one down from a shelf and screwed a twenty-five-millimeter lens and a seventy-five-millimeter lens onto the turret and showed Patterson how to turn the turret to align each lens to the viewfinder. Patterson walked up to the store window and pointed the camera at buildings across the street and peered through the viewfinder. Then Anderson showed Patterson how to attach the camera to a tripod.

Anderson remembered, "He was standing next to the tripod saying he thought he didn't need it. So I tried to get him to use a mono-pod. I told him as a rule of thumb he had to at least tie the camera to a stump to get a good picture."

To Patterson, the tripod, turret, light meter, and all the operations of the equipment were confusing. "He said he just wanted to figure out the simplest way he could do this [film project] without too much expense."

Patterson left the shop.

A few days later, near the end of the work week, Patterson returned yet again. "This time he came in to buy the camera, and he says, 'I'm ready to take these pictures. I seen this giant man a couple of times. I drove out in my Volkswagen to the end of a logging road and sat there in semidarkness, and this giant came out and lifted the front of my car.'"

Patterson was crazy, Anderson now thought. "I mean, I thought he was just giving me a rub, you know. But then I began to realize that he's serious, and he said, 'So I want to buy the equipment. I've made arrangements to get a costume of a gorilla out of a costume rental place in Los Angeles. I had to order it from Seattle. It's coming up on the bus this Saturday, and I want to take the pictures this weekend. I told them I'd return it on Sunday on the bus. I've got to get it back because it's very expensive. I had to put up some security for it.'"

Although surprised at Patterson's statements, Anderson humored him: "'Well, that's OK.' I was kind of getting a kick out of it, but I realized that he was lying to me or having hallucinations about the thing that came out of the woods and picked up his car. 'Well, then let's get with it,' I said."

And he brought out the camera he had showed Patterson earlier, the sixteen-millimeter Revere, the twenty-five- and seventy-five-millimeter lenses, the tripod, and the light meter. He told Patterson that light conditions made all the difference in photographing wildlife, especially a creature running around at night. It was better if Patterson could photograph the giant during the middle of the day.

Patterson didn't want the light meter. "'I don't know how to use it,'" he said. "'Can't you just set the camera for me? You tell me what to set it for, and I'll do it. I'll wait until the sunshine is there.'"

Anderson demonstrated how to move and set the f-stop, slid in the film cartridge, which held fifty feet of film, and showed Patterson the button to push to start filming.

Patterson bought the camera and a twenty-five-millimeter lens. For five dollars a day, he rented a seventy-five-millimeter Wollensak telephoto lens and the tripod. Then Patterson went out the door.

On the Monday after the weekend when Patterson would have used the gorilla suit, Patterson returned the equipment and sold the camera back to Anderson for twenty dollars. Anderson extracted the film cartridge from the magazine and said, "'I'll send it in for processing, and you can pick it up at the end of next week.'"

Anderson shipped the cartridge to Kodak in Palo Alto. A week later, Patterson picked up the processed film at the shop. On a subsequent visit, Patterson told Anderson, "'The pictures came out pretty good. Some parts were better than others.'"

Sometime later light snow fell in the Yakima area. Anderson opened the *Yakima Daily Republic* one day and read a story regarding the discovery of unknown tracks of an animal that had walked across a snow-covered road in the Ahtanum Valley. Anderson surmised that Patterson had created the tracks. When the little man stopped by the store, Anderson said, "'Hey, that's a pretty good job you did out in the valley there. It looked pretty good because the newspaper reported it as, like, six-foot strides. How did you do that?' 'Well, yeah,' he said, 'uh . . . hmm [Patterson mumbled] . . . I did it with stilts.' He had a little smile on his face. I said, 'Well, that's great.'"

Patterson said, "'I have to ask you never to say anything about this because

I've done this for my wife because I'm dying of cancer. I want to leave something for my wife.'"

Anderson said nothing; he wasn't surprised. During his many trips to Anderson's shop, Patterson had piece by piece revealed his motive—to produce a film of a fake Bigfoot to make money. To Anderson, Patterson's motives seemed to be for "a good cause."

After Patterson left the store, Anderson never saw Patterson again.

His story finished, I asked Anderson to analyze his experience with Patterson. "What the heck, if people will buy it, why not? People will buy anything. He was giving me this sob story about his health, and he wanted to leave something for his wife, and you know, *I* wasn't doing it [shooting a fake film]. I was just listening to his story. I really didn't pay that much attention to it. It wasn't important. When he got down to the point of ordering the costume from the Los Angeles costume house, I realized he was really going to try to pull something. Well, I still didn't know what it was until it eventually surfaced the way it did [the Bluff Creek film]. But, you know, I had no idea what he believed or what he didn't believe. I mean, he wanted to make this photograph. I'm there to sell him equipment, and that's what I was doing."

When Anderson saw Patterson's footage on TV years later, he remembered his experience with Patterson. "I just laughed. I couldn't believe it. I thought, 'This is unbelievable.' Ha, ha! Yeah. 'What a bunch of horseshit,' I thought."

In 1967 Anderson invested in property in the Seattle area. By 1972 he had sold the gun and camera shop and had moved to Kirkland near Seattle.

As I interviewed Anderson, he presumed that the cartridge he shipped to Kodak in Palo Alto for processing was shot in the Yakima area—and that later Patterson *announced* that it was shot in California. I understood Anderson's reasoning. Patterson told him he had rented a gorilla suit only for a weekend. Therefore, Patterson must have used it in the Yakima area in order to ship it back to Los Angeles on Sunday. Patterson also had told him that a "walking man" was appearing in the Ahtanum Valley. Ergo, Patterson didn't shoot the famous footage in California.

This was sound reasoning. However, the old Bigfooters had agreed that Patterson had used a CineKodak, K-100 sixteen-millimeter camera—not a Revere—to shoot his famous footage. Also, the plastic finish on the CineKodak camera was black, *not* light-brown as was the Revere. Plus, Anderson remembered Patterson using Kodak *Kodachrome* film. The Bigfoot researchers, however, all agreed that Patterson had used *Kodachrome II* film. In addition, Anderson remembered loading the Revere with a fifty-foot film cartridge. Patterson had shot the Bluff Creek footage using a *one-hundred-foot roll*. Finally, Anderson was confident that Patterson visited his shop in 1961, not in 1967, the year Patterson shot his famous footage. Therefore, whatever footage Patterson shot using the Revere camera, that footage was *not* the Bluff Creek footage.

Most probably Patterson bought the Revere to try his hand at hoax film-making using a standard rental ape suit. Anderson had set the f-stop on the Revere for Patterson—for daylight filming—and Patterson probably shot his actor in the costume in full daylight.

"Maybe he was practicing with the Revere," I suggested.

"It very well could be," Anderson replied. He conceded that the Revere was a poor camera for professional film-making: "photographers had trouble getting the gate to open properly when they slid in the magazine."

Duane Anderson's story supported my theory that early in his Bigfoot "career," Patterson was practicing film hoaxing. The still photos that Duane had developed showed an alleged Bigfoot at Rimrock Lake. Patterson might have realized that still photos revealed too much detail in an ape suit, whereas shaking a motion picture camera blurred images and confounded the viewer while exposing just enough to intrigue.

However, most damning of all was that Patterson never told anyone he had photographed Bigfoot at Rimrock Lake, or filmed a "walking man" in the Ahtanum Valley. During one of his visits to Anderson's shop, Patterson mentioned that he was taking notes for a book. "I was under the impression that he was trying to make credible what he was writing about," Anderson said. If Patterson was writing a book, wouldn't he, the dedicated Bigfoot hunter, have published his startling Bigfoot photos in his book? Wasn't Patterson a Bigfoot believer? Hadn't he bought and rented equipment to film "the giant" to prove it existed? If nothing else, published photographs and accounts of his own sightings would have immediately gained him notoriety and made his book an instant success. Yet, the record showed that his first and only Bigfoot sighting was of the hairy, breasted creature at Bluff Creek, October 20, 1967.

Patterson supplied his motive for creating hoaxes when he revealed to Anderson that he was dying of cancer: He hoped to generate money for his wife and family. It was all about survival. Patterson was suffering from cancer when he visited Bigfooter John Green in 1964 or 1965 to ask for newspaper clippings for his book in progress. As early as 1961, an ailing Patterson was experimenting with motion picture film and an ape suit. Why fault a doomed man for deceiving the public? Wasn't it for a good cause? But, as much as I tried to sympathize with Patterson, wasn't he, in the final analysis, just a liar?

After thanking Anderson for his time, I discussed the interview with Pat.

"Patterson was a con artist," she said harshly after she'd muted the sound on the TV. "I don't care if he had cancer. He decided he wouldn't work like everyone else. He lied to make a living."

I agreed. Patterson had some very real talents. If he had used them in honest ways, perhaps he could have made an honest living. Unfortunately, he didn't.

As I returned to the study to begin transcribing the Anderson tapes, I concluded that I should also confront both Merritt and Dahinden with Anderson's story. They were two of the biggest supporters of Patterson. On the evening of April 18, 2001, I opened my e-mail. One was from Larry Lund; he just learned that

Dahinden had died a few moments before. For several years Dahinden had been ill from colon cancer, although whenever I had called him he sounded healthy.

I told Pat the news. "I'm convinced Rene knew the real truth about Patterson. He said he always gave out the 'clean version' of Patterson."

I continued writing. In mid-April, I began the process of finding a book agent. On April 28, Pat and I attended memorial services for Dahinden at the Vancouver Gun Club in Richmond, Canada. Just inside the doors that opened onto a meeting hall stood a living Dahinden, or rather his image, on a cardboard Kokanee beer point-of-purchase display. On a table, an ash tray cradling Dahinden's pipe sat next to a pair of large, hairy slippers. Visitors were mulling around photos of Dahinden spread out on cloth-covered tables. In the meeting room, family members, friends, and admirers took turns standing up to fondly remember the crusty, old Bigfooter. Nearly each speaker was male and middle-aged; some of them broke down and sobbed. Before leaving, Pat and I shot photos of Dahinden's trailer and the metal box he had slept in, surrounded by rusting junk. "Depressing," I said as we drove away. "A sad ending for a man who spent half his life staring at the Patterson film."

A few days later at work, my phone rang. It was a book agent. "Your book is fabulous! I want to represent you." Finally, I thought, the truth will be told.

"You know, I've *got* to phone Jerry Merritt," I told Pat one night when I took a break from my writing. "He's got a bad heart. I want to make sure I go over that story he told me—how Patterson and Gimlin stopped by early in the morning to get him to go with them to Bluff Creek. I'm convinced Patterson wanted him to be part of the hoax. Patterson wanted a second 'witness.'"

Then, May 13 my phone rang. "Did you hear?" Vilma Radford rasped. "Jerry Merritt died."

"What?" I was stunned.

"Yes. He had moved with his wife out to a farm near Dayton, Washington. He was standing in a drug store picking up a prescription. He collapsed and died right there. He died on May 4."

I stifled a sob. I had liked Merritt. He was genuine, unpretentious. He had given me many hours of his time. But I was convinced he'd gone to his grave without telling me the whole truth about Patterson.

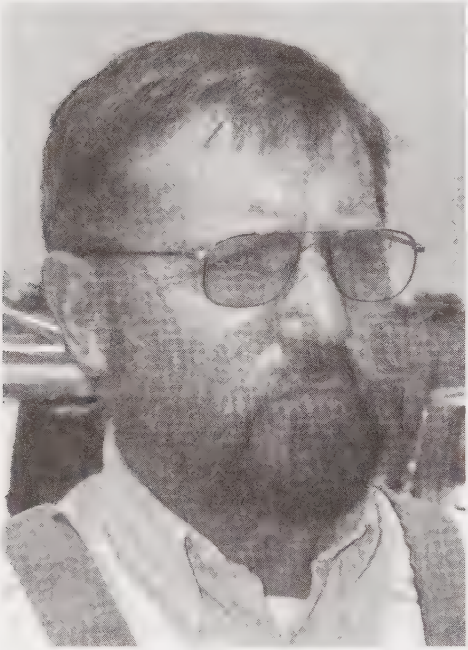
I cupped the receiver. "Pat! Jerry Merritt died!"

Pat walked quickly to the room. "What?"

I told her the news. I thanked Radford for calling me and I hung up.

We found ourselves crying. "Jerry had a love for life," I said. I put my arm around Pat to console her.

"The witnesses are starting to die," I said. "Mac MacEntire, Dahinden, now Merritt. I'm glad, at least, I got Merritt's story. But I should have visited him right after Heironimus confessed. I should have pushed him to tell me the truth. We definitely need to interview Gimlin and DeAtley to get their response to Bob's confession. Gimlin and DeAtley aren't young men."



Bob Hammermeister, a lifelong resident of Ahtanum, Washington, saw Roger Patterson's Bigfoot suit in the trunk of a car parked outside the Idle Hour Tavern in Wiley City, Washington. Photo by Pat Long.

On June 2, we drove to Yakima. Bob's story would rise or fall on the statements of people who remembered Bob telling them he had worn the Bigfoot suit. Over the phone Bob had given me the names of several people to talk to.

One was Bernard Hammermeister, who Bob fondly referred to as "Bun." We rendezvoused with Bob at the Ranch House Restaurant in Ahtanum, then followed his pickup truck onto Hammermeister's property on the edge of the little town of Ahtanum.

Dogs yipped at our heels as Pat and I strode up the gravel driveway. To our right was an imposing, two-story farm house, its white paint peeling. On the red chimney were large, white letters: BFH. We met up with Bob in front of a metal shed where a huge, red tiller squatted, large metal dishes hanging off its arms. A man wearing grease-stained, brown coveralls, a cell phone tucked into their breast pocket, and a long-sleeve, blue, button-down dress shirt daubed with grease stood up from behind the cab where he had been tinkering.

"Mr. Hammermeister?" I called up to him, Pat by my side.

The man, wearing a gray-streaked beard and ragged mustache, took three steps down off the machine. Bob introduced me to him. Hammermeister's stained hand had a sure grip. I looked down into pale, blue eyes behind metal-rimmed glasses.

I explained that Bob had named him as a witness who could vouch for his story of wearing the Bigfoot costume. Hammermeister gave me permission to record him.

"I've known Honker for fifty years," he said.

"Honker?"

"That's what we call Bob. It's his nickname."

"Oh."

"We used to hang out down at a place called The Freezer on West Yakima

Avenue," piped up Bob. "Everyone would drag the avenue in their cars. We dragged the avenue and went around The Freezer and back down the avenue. A guy named Joe Peterson worked there. When I first started hanging around there, I ordered a hamburger from Joe. He said, 'Here's a hamburger for Bob Huh, Bob Huh—aww, Bob Honker!' From then on, everyone called me 'Honker.'"

"I see."

I discovered that Hammermeister was nearly fifty-eight years old; he was a union roofer, and he planned to ranch full-time after he retired with a good pension. He had lived in the Ahtanum Valley his entire life. As a boy he had met Bob at the Tampico rodeo grounds. When Bob's family moved to Ninetieth Avenue, Hammermeister and Bob attended the same grade school and high school. One reason for their close friendship was the location of their respective homes. Hammermeister's property bordered the Heironimus family's original property—before the 1974 flood—on Ninetieth Avenue. After high school, Hammermeister and Bob remained friends. In his mid-twenties, Hammermeister became aware of Roger Patterson. For a time, Hammermeister and Patterson worked for the same roofing company. Patterson was sincere in his belief in Bigfoot, Hammermeister said.

I steered Hammermeister to the subject of Bob and the Bigfoot suit.

"Personally I didn't see him wear it, but I know he had it. And Bob doesn't lie. He told me he wore it, and I believe him."

"Do you remember a car?" I prompted.

"Yep. It was probably at Wiley City. There was a bunch of us. I don't remember who was all there now." He did remember perhaps four people standing near a car, the make and year of which he couldn't remember.

"Did you see anything in the car?"

"I seen something in the car. A big, old pile of fur there was what it was!" He laughed. "Like he just throwed it in there. I think it was in the trunk."

"In the trunk?"

"It was in the back, let's put it that way."

"Did Bob say it was a Bigfoot suit?" I asked.

"Yeah."

"Do you remember any details about this suit?"

"No. We just kind of talked about it. God, we were young then, you know."

"But you do remember seeing this thing in the car?"

"I do." He poked his glasses up on his nose. "I seen it. I was there."

"Do you remember anything Bob said?"

"He said that it was a suit, and it was, I guess. He said he went down and took that trip, and they did a film clip. He said, 'That's what I wore when we went down and did our thing.'"

"And you believed him?"

"Sure. Why would I not believe him?"

I needed more justification. "But *why* did you believe him?"

"Because he's my friend, and I know he wouldn't lie to me."

"You had no reason to disbelieve him?"

"No. None whatsoever."

Bob stood silently listening fifteen feet away.

I stared into Hammermeister's eyes. "Again, on what do you base your belief that Bob is honest?"

"Because I know him," Hammermeister said firmly. "I mean we grew up together."

I asked him if during their long friendship Bob had ever lied to him or tricked him.

"Did you ever lie to your classmates, tell some fibs?" he replied and chuckled. "I mean, other than that, no."

"So, Bob Heironimus in your opinion is an honest man?"

"Yes, he is. Very much. We've been friends all our lives. I believe in the man."

I asked Hammermeister about his memories of the Idle Hour Tavern. He said he frequently drank beer with Bob at the tavern and still occasionally drank beer there with him. He remembered Prentis Beck and Rod Thornton often bringing plaster casts of Bigfoot tracks into the tavern as well as into the nearby Simcoe Tavern.

"Prentis was really involved in Bigfoot." Hammermeister smiled. "Prentis, I don't know if you wanted to believe him or not, 'cause he was a Southern boy, and he—you know—he'd tell stories." He laughed.

I asked Hammermeister if he remembered who was with him near Bob's car.

He couldn't remember. "At the time, we both had a few beers, maybe too many. At that time you could go outside and drink beer, tailgate and all that. Honker said—he called me Hammer—he says, 'Hammer, don't let people know about this.' He was talking a little bit loud, but I don't think too many people heard it. But it wasn't just me—there was a couple other people. Doggone it!" He struggled to remember the names of other witnesses. He wondered if Bill Heironimus was there. Unfortunately, I knew, Bill Heironimus was dead. Hammermeister didn't remember seeing Les Johnson outside the tavern.

"Honker was actually not broadcasting the thing, you know," Hammermeister said. "There was no reason to say anything. I mean, when he told me he did it, and he didn't want to spread it around for a while, it kind of buried the hatchet right there. I mean, he had the suit. And he trusted his friends, and he showed us."

"Did he tell you not to tell anyone?"

"I think so. Yeah, I know he did because, you know, there was still supposed to be a payola on this thing, and he didn't have it."

For a few more minutes, I tried to wring more details from his memory. But he could add nothing. Suddenly the temperature fell and the clouds, which had been steadily turning pitch black, unleashed a shower of pebble-sized hail. We all retreated into the work shed and chatted until the storm finally lifted.

"Well, I've got to go," said Bob.

"Bob, Pat and I will stop by tomorrow. I've still got some things to go over with you."

"OK."

After Bob drove away, I asked Hammermeister about his farm. His forebears had lived in the Yakima region since 1864. He owned sixty-four acres. After describing his livestock, an earnest expression settled into his face, and he looked up at me. "Bob is an honest man. He was my best man when I got married in Reno."

I shook his hand and thanked him for the interview. It began to rain, and Pat and I trotted to the car.

As we drove onto Ahtanum Road, we shared our impressions of Hammermeister. "He struck me as a serious, hard-working man," I said. "He's lived here his whole life. He seemed honest. Of course, maybe he's in league with Bob, like Hammermeister is a loyal friend who wants to help out his buddy. Maybe he's supporting Bob in a lie."

"Honey! You don't really believe that?"

"Yeah, that's it. Hammermeister is willing to lie for his friend to make some money."

"Aw, come on!"

Then I laughed. "No. Hammermeister seemed honest to me. Too bad we don't have the suit. Hey, let's take a look at the ghost town while we're out here."

I turned around and we headed west on Ahtanum Road. Fifteen minutes later, as I pulled to a stop and looked down on Mike Fairchild's house below, my stomach sank. "It's gone!"

On the other side of Merritt's "Dry Gulch" where the single, gray building used to stand in wild grass was . . . *nothing*. An emptiness invaded my heart. I drove down a new asphalt driveway onto Fairchild's property. Tears glistened on Pat's cheeks.

I knocked on Fairchild's front door. Fairchild answered. His face had more age lines and he was a bit more stooped.

I reminded him of who I was and my book project. He remembered.

"I notice that the last of Jerry Merritt's western buildings is gone," I said sadly.

"Yes. It was leaning over so much I was afraid someone would get hurt," he said. "So I asked the fire department if they wanted to use it for training. They came over one day and burned it down."

"Burned it down?" I felt numb. "Well, is it OK if my wife and I take pictures of where it stood?"

"Where it *stood?*" He chuckled. "Sure. Be my guest."

Pat and I wandered back and forth in front "Dry Gulch." From various angles, we shot photos of the gently waving blades of yellow grass on the other side of the creek. I found myself shedding tears. The sequence of events that had brought me to this very moment poured over me in a wave. Three years had passed, and now Merritt had slipped into the vastness of time to join up with MacEntire and Dahinden. And here on Merritt's old, former property no hints now remained that the rockabilly singer had ever lived and walked on the land, that his western town had ever even existed, or that Patterson had lifted the huge lookout platform into the cottonwood tree. I knew that Fairchild would die, too, and then the others: Gimlin, Heironimus, DeAtley, the rest of the old Bigfooters, and everyone who knew the truth of Roger Patterson. And eventually even Pat, who stood in front of me taking my picture, and I would pass into the dark. Only the book I was writing would remain, a footnote in American history. I felt the cold shadow of time descending upon me and weighing down my shoulders. I felt an urgent need to see the truth published.

"We need to go," I said, and broke the spell. "Let's try to find Cliff Miller."

Before I interviewed others who knew Heironimus, I wanted to talk to Miller, the last of the three camera shop owners who did business with Patterson. Mattson of Sheppard's Camera Shop was dead. Harvey Anderson had told his story. Perhaps Miller could cast light on the processing of Patterson's Bigfoot footage, one of the remaining mysteries of the Patterson hoax.

As we left Fairchild's property, Pat opened our worn Yakima phone book and a map. Soon I was pulling up in front of Valeta and Cliff Miller's retirement village condominium. Pat stayed behind in the car. I bounded up the walkway and rapped on the door. A slight woman in a summery dress answered. She confirmed that she was Valeta. I introduced myself and the reason for my surprise visit—Roger Patterson. "Cliff!" she called down a hallway.

A slender man appeared at the door. He was dressed in white linen pants and a colorful short-sleeve shirt. His hair on his arms was burnished from the sub. He held a straw cowboy hat. He appeared to be preparing to go out. I learned that the man, eighty-year-old Cliff Miller, had owned and managed Miller's Camera Shop from 1956 to 1998—and he was quite familiar with Patterson. Patterson, he said, frequently came to his store to buy film or leave off film to be sent out for processing. I wasn't surprised at Miller's answer to my question, "And where was it sent for processing?"

"Palo Alto, California. All Kodak color film and Kodachrome film were shipped to Palo Alto. I'd put the film into a container, and it would be picked up by a service that flew it to California."

"How long would it take to be processed and returned?"

"Four to six days."

"Patterson supposedly shot his footage on October 20, a Friday, and Roger and Al DeAtley had it in their hands on October 22, a Sunday. Is that possible?"

He squinted for a moment. "No. It took four to six days. One method to get film developed was to use a prepaid Kodak mailer. A customer could buy the mailer at my shop and later place his roll of film inside and mail it to Palo Alto. Kodak would process it and mail it to the customer."

Valeta chimed in. "I don't think Roger could do that. He didn't have any money."

"Did Patterson ever rent or lease cameras from you?" I asked.

"Not to my knowledge."

"Do you ever remember Al DeAtley coming into your shop?"

"No." Miller frowned at me.

"And you don't remember Roger ever buying any cameras from you?"

"No. How many times do I have to answer the same questions?" he barked.

I thanked him for his time.

"I wish you luck with your book," Miller said with a forced smile.

"We now have another scenario regarding the film processing," I said to Pat as we drove away. "Either Patterson or DeAtley—or anybody for that matter—could have shipped the film to Palo Alto in a self-addressed, prepaid mailer. Kodak would have processed it and then mailed the finished film right to that person. The photographer wouldn't even have to drive to Seattle. You know what this means?" I pulled the car into the entryway of the Big Valley Motel where we would stay for the night.

"What?" She was busy folding up the map.

I braked to a stop. "Patterson could process *any* Kodak film he shot *whenever* he wanted to. If he wanted to avoid suspicion, he'd just use a prepaid mailer. Rather than walk into Miller's with a roll of film and be spotted, he'd just drop the roll off at the post office at night. DeAtley could do the same. If someone saw Patterson or DeAtley on a specific date dropping off film in Miller's shop, and if that someone knew the turnaround time for film shipped to and from Palo Alto, that someone could *figure out when the film was actually shot.*"

"And that someone would be you!"

I laughed. "Well, anyway," I said as I set the hand-brake, "if Bob *is* telling the truth, and he *did* mail the unprocessed film to DeAtley, and *if* DeAtley did use a prepaid mailer or take the film personally to Miller's, then the Bigfoot film was shot *long before October 20.*" I swung open the car door. "Let's check in."

After a good night's rest, we drove out to Ahtanum. I wanted to cover some items with Bob Heironimus. I had never shown him the blowup of "the look." I also had a photo of Bob's face taken by Pat during his first interview. The two images had been nagging at me for months. Bob's nose and the Bigfoot's nose resembled each other. In the blowup of "the look," I was certain I could see Bob's nose and cheeks exposed through a cutout in the mask. But Bob had only mentioned eyeholes in the mask, no cutout.

The *eyes* of the Bigfoot also puzzled me. In several interviews Bob had said that his own eyes were *set back* from the eyeholes in the mask. If true, how was I able to see *his right brown eye* so close to one of the eyeholes? Something was awry. I sensed Bob was either lying or hiding something. More than once I heard him say that "something" would prove his story. Now was the time to confront him on this "something."

As we stepped out of our car onto Bob's driveway, he walked around the side of house to greet us. Dressed in a pair of jeans and a T-shirt, he was carrying a golf club. We joined him on the lawn where he settled comfortably into a golfer's stance and lopped the golden heads off of several dandelions. "Club's good for taking care of dandelions, too," he said and laughed. "How ya doin'?" he said. He seemed free of the tension evident in earlier interviews.

We sat down with him at the kitchen table. Glenda situated herself against a counter and folded her arms. I opened my briefcase—*klunk! klunk!*—and withdrew the blowup of "the look" and the photo of Bob's face. I laid them side by side on the table.

"That's your nose, right?" I pointed at the Bigfoot's nose.

Bob peered at the image. "The mask wasn't over my nose like that."

"The mask had a nose of its own?"

"I think so, yeah. I mean, that wasn't my real nose."

"The mask had a false nose?"

"Yeah."

He explained again how the helmet of the Bigfoot "head" fitted down over his own head. Somehow a mask was affixed to the helmet. Space of at least an inch or more was between the inside surface of the mask and his own face. He was certain that his nose didn't fit inside the mask's nose. "No, that's not my real nose." Perhaps rubber or horsehide had been molded into the shape of the nose, he conjectured.

"Could the nose have been bought in a store?" I asked.

"Could have been. Knowing Roger, he didn't have two nickels to rub together, so he just manufactured everything himself."

Now is the time, I said silently. "Bob, you've said you have something that will prove you're telling the truth."

He was silent.

"You need to be completely honest with me. I'm attempting to write a complete, authentic story. I can't force you to tell me what you don't want to tell me. It's a matter of your integrity and honesty."

He grimaced. "I've got an ace in the hole," he said a little grumpily. "It doesn't concern you. It doesn't concern anybody. I know if I saw the suit I could prove one way that I wore the suit."

"If you have physical evidence, that would help. Do you have part of the suit or the suit itself?"

"No."

"Does Gimlin?"

"I have no idea. He claims he doesn't know where the suit is."

I looked down at "the look." "Could it be something related to the mask?"

"I wouldn't want to tell because if it got out. . . ." He frowned. "See, if it gets out, then they have a way to deny it."

I persisted. "As the writer of this book, I really need to know."

"It wouldn't do you one bit of good unless you had the suit!" he fumed. He struck his knee with his hand. "If you can get me the suit, I'll tell you what it is."

A glimmer of an idea surfaced in my mind, but it quickly submerged from sight. Nonetheless, I flicked the blowup of "the look" closer to him. "Now, you're saying the mask had a false nose?"

"Right. There wasn't much room between the mask and my eyes."

"The mask had eyeholes, right?"

"Yep."

I intently examined the blowup. "I can see the eyeholes pretty clearly."

"Yeah. Pretty good, yeah." An anxious expression enveloped his face.

"But there's not much definition to the eyeholes. If your eyes were set back from the mask," I asked as I fixed on the right eye of the Bigfoot, "*where exactly would your eyes be?*"

I eyeballed Bob. He began squirming in his chair.

"Right here!" And he tapped his finger repeatedly on the Bigfoot's eyes. "Right here! Same place where the holes are. Behind the holes."

Is that why I was seeing Bob's right eye when it should be set back an inch from the right eye-hole? I thought to myself.

"So you're saying, Bob, that there would have been artificial eyes in the eyeholes and also *holes in the artificial eyes* for you to look through?"

His face was paralyzed with discomfort. He was blinking rapidly. "No, there weren't artificial eyes."

"Isn't that your eye *there?*" I tapped on the photo.

"Yes." He moaned. "Alright! You've got me cornered. I'm going to tell you this, but if you ever breathe a word, I'll kick your butt. Uh, I have a prosthesis eye, right?"

"Right. Your right eye."

"OK." He took a deep breath. His chair squealed on the linoleum as he pushed it back and stood up. "When we was practicing up there at Roger's with the suit on, I said, 'Wait a minute. This ain't gonna work. When I turn and look at you, Roger, you're not gonna be able to see my eyes lookin' at you.'"

Heironimus pressed together the tips of his thumbs and index fingers to form two circles. He positioned his hands in front of his eyes and squinted at me through the circles.

"I said to Roger, 'I don't know if you can see my eyes from that far away.' So there was a simple solution. I took one of my extra prosthesis eyes, and Roger took it and"—he struck his finger forcefully on the right eye of the Bigfoot—"molded that eye *right there* into the socket of the mask, molded it into the clay fabric or whatever he used, put that eye in there, and turned the eye a little bit, and when I turned my head, *the eye was lookin' right straight at him.*"

Excitement sliced through me. Stunned, for several moments I was dumbstruck. Bob had revealed that *only he* could have worn Patterson's Bigfoot costume, for who else but Bob Heironimus could have known that the eyeholes in the mask would look like gaping, black spots to the astute viewer when the "Bigfoot's" head was facing toward the camera? Who else but Bob knew what it was like to be inside the Bigfoot suit and where his eyes were in relation to the eyeholes? Who else but Heironimus had a *right* prosthetic eye—and one that was brown, the same color as the right eye of the Bigfoot? Now it was clear to me why there were reflections on the surface of the right eye of the Bigfoot: they were from light dancing off the hard, curved surface of Bob's right prosthetic eye. In addition, Bob had told his little story of the right eye with such spontaneity and naturalness, with such unadorned simplicity and the innocence of direct, personal experience, that I instantly knew he was telling the truth. I looked at Pat whose mouth had dropped open.

"And," I said, my voice cracking slightly, "therefore, *the left eye* was your good eye and in shadow."

"Yep. You can see that right eye protruding out there and the other back in there a-ways."

"*This is amazing!*" I exclaimed. "That's evidence, Bob!"

He plopped into his chair. "Sure it is," he said somberly. "Nobody knows about this but me and you and Glenn Cassidy. If we had the suit, if the suit had the prosthetic eye *right there*," he thumped the eye of the Bigfoot, "and if I can prove *that's* the prosthetic eye I wore, *that would be great!* Because how would I know how the prosthetic eye got there unless I wore the damn suit? But it wouldn't do any good to mention it in the book unless we have the suit." He slapped the tabletop. "And if you mention it in the book, then somebody can take the prosthetic eye *out* of the suit—if they had the suit—and destroy it and say, 'Well, the son of a bitch is a liar.'"

"But, Bob," I protested, "why would anyone drag the suit out of steamer trunk or an attic and proclaim, 'Look, there's no false eye there. Heironimus is a liar!'? I mean, then the whole world would be able to see the suit, and the hoax would be revealed. You see my point?"

"Yeah, but—"

"I've thought about the suit," I interrupted. "Either Patterson destroyed it, or he sold it to somebody, or he gave it to someone in his family or his relations or a friend. If one of the hoaxers has it, why would he admit his knowledge of or involvement in the hoax, especially if perpetuating the hoax means a continuous stream of money for that person? It just doesn't make sense."

"But it's just my word."

I decided to drop the subject.

I returned the photos to the briefcase, and I took out an atlas. I wanted to cover the Willow Creek-Weitchpec confusion—the rendezvous point with Patterson and Gimlin—one final time.

"It makes more sense that you met them in Weitchpec." I placed my finger on the tiny dot of Weitchpec on the map of California.

"I know I went through Happy Camp. They were having a rodeo. I met them at the gas station. Then I drove outside town, and we met up. Then we drove maybe five to ten miles up the highway. I don't remember exactly."

"That would be Highway 96." I traced the route on the map.

He nodded. "We turned right onto a gravel road and pulled up this long hill." He stepped me through once again the location of the hiding place for his mother's car and Patterson and Gimlin's camp.

I suddenly popped a question: "When you were at the film site, do you remember stepping over a log?"

He had a blank look. "I don't remember."

I knew from my transcripts that he had said he *had* stepped over a log. Now he didn't remember. Were specific details of Patterson's film, which Bob had watched over the years on television, influencing his already imperfect memory?

"Do you remember talking to the guys at the Idle Hour Tavern?"

"I just don't remember." He shook his head. "I just don't remember." He was genuinely puzzled.

"Could you have been drunk?"

He glared at me. "You don't have to be drunk *not* to remember."

As I looked at Bob, I felt he was being completely truthful with me. During my interviews he had many opportunities to shore up this weak aspect of his case—this lapse of memory of his statements at the Idle Hour Tavern. Why hadn't he, from the beginning, simply said, "I remember that night well. I was parked at the Idle Hour Tavern exactly *here*; I said exactly *this* to X, Y, and Z." Wouldn't he *want* to provide every detail of this key part of his story to convince me he was telling the truth?

We talked a while longer. Finally he said peevishly, "There's probably been *five hundred* people have asked me in the last twenty-five years, 'Was that you in that suit? I heard that was you in that suit?' 'Well, yeah.'" He gave me a hard look. "Why deny it? I got nothin' out of it. What have I got to lose?"

"Well, Bob, I'm going to interview those other people you mentioned. I feel I'm nearing the conclusion of the book."

"OK."

We stood up, and Glenda, who had listened quietly from her place at the counter, accompanied us and Bob into the living room. There we all chatted. Finally, Pat and I broke away.

As we drove toward Yakima, we chattered about Bob's story of the artificial eye molded into the Bigfoot mask. We found it hard to believe that, if he *wasn't* the actor in the suit, he could have dreamed up such a story. My concerns about minor discrepancies in his overall story began to fade.

"You know," I said as we pulled onto First Street, "he sticks by his story. He doesn't deviate from the major points. He doesn't embellish any part of it. And he isn't retracting any part of it. It's just hard not to believe him."

"Honey, he wore the suit thirty-four years ago. How could he remember *everything* that happened that long ago?"

"Well, we still need to talk to more people who know him."

Back in Mill Creek, I began writing the final chapters. Then I picked up the phone to interview several people Bob had named. The fifty-four-year-old man on the other end of the line—disabled as the result of heart problems—agreed to an interview under the condition of anonymity. However, lest there be any doubt, I can prove he exists.

In his soft country drawl, Clarence (pseudonym) told me that in 1969 he joined his brother as an employee of Roger Patterson's Northwest Research. The two brothers traveled from the Canadian border to the California border in an old Dodge pickup with a camper where they slept. Moving from town to town, they interviewed alleged Bigfoot witnesses. The brothers had been instructed to tape the interviews and give the tapes to Patterson.

"We were 'field representatives,'" Clarence chuckled. "I went down to Roger's and I signed a contract that I'd never discuss the interviews or anything like that." After each interview, Patterson would direct the men to follow up on new leads.

"We got three hundred dollars a month. And subsistence pay, which we didn't get. A lot of times we ate crackers and ketchup because we couldn't get no money. It was quite an experience."

Clarence had recently married when he started working for Patterson, and he quit after two months.

"And you knew Bob Heironimus?"

"Yep." He had met him in the third grade in the Tampico Grade School and remained Bob's friend throughout elementary school. After attending high school in California, Clarence returned to Yakima and re-established his friendship when he met Bob at rodeos and taverns. He remembered working with Bob one season at Lenington's Orchards. "I was dumpin' apples and Bob was segregatin'."

I asked him when he first heard that Bob had worn the Bigfoot suit. Clarence said it was probably in 1969 when he went to work for Patterson. He had heard that Bob wore the suit. "I had no reason to doubt it."

"Do you believe Bob based upon what you know about him?

"Yeah, yeah."

"He's never lied to you about anything?"

"Not that I know of. He never had no big business deals or nothin' where it would be worth lying over anything."

"Your impression is that he seems to be an honest man?"

"Yeah. He's one of the guys."

"Has anyone told you Bob Heironimus is a liar?"

"Oh, no. No."

"Has anyone said Bob is a crook?"

"No. No one's said nothin' like that."

"No one's told you anything negative about him?"

"No. No more than having a few too many beers one night or something." He laughed slightly. "No, nothing criminal or anything like that."

"When he was with you in taverns, did he ever talk to you about wearing the suit?"

"You know," he mused, "he was probably told the same thing I was at a different time: 'Don't discuss it.'"

He repeated that he wanted anonymity in the book because of the contract he had signed with Patterson. "For all I know it's binding, it's legal. I know how lawyers are."

I doubted the contract had any legal standing anymore. More than three decades after his death, Roger Patterson was still casting a cloud of fear over parts of Yakima.

I made phone contact with another person who was willing to talk about Bob—Jim Falon. I had interviewed Falon two-and-a-half years earlier over the phone. As a boy of fourteen, he had worked two summers helping Patterson with his miniature wagons. In my first interview, Falon had nothing negative to say about Patterson.

"Since I last talked to you," I began, "I've found out Patterson wasn't a terribly honest guy. He was sincere in his beliefs, but—"

"He was a car dealer," Falon interjected, and he broke into high-pitched laughter. It was infectious laughter—full of energy and innocence and without spite.

Given Falon's new attitude toward Paterson, I persuaded him to sit down with me for a long, face-to-face interview. In August Pat and I met up with him at his ranch west of Yakima.

We sat with him at a large, pinewood dining room table in his ranch house. Mounted on a wall and facing the table was a mirror framed in weathered planks from an old fence. Barbed wire and a horseshoe decorated the planks. Falon's hair was matted from sweat; moments before he had been outside talking to friends about a horse he was breaking for them.

He met Heironimus at about fifteen, Falon said. The Falon family, which included eleven children, lived on a farm on Seventy-fourth Avenue in Ahtanum. "Our house was the hang-out place for kids in the neighborhood." The Heironimus family lived within a mile of the Falons, and the Heironimus brothers frequently visited.

About 1965, Bob bought a black quarter horse from J. L. Bartlett and became a team-roper, joining up with Falon, who had been roping since age nine, and other team ropers. Falon was highly respected for his skills, and the ropers flocked to Falon to learn how to improve their skills. Although Falon was much younger than the team-ropers, they took him to rodeos. "I won most of the money!" Falon laughed.

In March 1967, Falon's team roping ended when he was drafted into the Army. He was trained as an air assault infantryman in the First Cavalry and shipped in August 1967 to Vietnam.

In early September 1968, Falon learned that his mother was dying from a brain tumor. The Army picked him up from a rice paddy and transported him home. Two weeks later, his platoon was hit; only three out of forty-five men survived. The Army let Falon live at home, but Monday through Friday he drove to the Yakima Firing Center where he had been reassigned. His weekends were free.

That fall Falon renewed his ties with his cowboy buddies at the Idle Hour Tavern, the Heironimus brothers, Bun Hammermeister and Bun's brother Joe, the Record brothers, Russ Bohannon, and Jim Riddle. Falon wasn't yet twenty-one, so he used his military ID to buy beer at the Idle Hour.

"You went to the Idle Hour quite often?" I asked.

"You *had* to be there." He grinned. "You might miss something."

"Was that when you heard about Bob Heironimus wearing the Bigfoot suit?"

"Yep."

"You hadn't heard about Patterson's film?"

"Nope. I had missed it."

Falon was shipped to Vietnam two months before Patterson's amazing feat. When he came home to be with his mother, his buddies told him about the film and Bob's role in it.

"They told me: 'Oh, yeah, Honker was up there dressed up.'"

Curiously, locals were now reporting Bigfoot west of Yakima. "[W]e'd never seen no Bigfoot, or *nothin'*, in our whole lives, and all of a sudden, here on Wide Hollow, just below the school, there'd been a sighting one night. Everybody's laughing, 'Honker, you got to stay in the cage. You can't be out running around anymore.' There was always little comments like that."

"And what was Bob's reaction?"

"Bob was kind of quiet. He didn't come out and boast or brag about it, because it was kind of a hush-hush deal. Everybody just kind of laughed it off. 'Aw, Honker. . . .' He'd just kind of grin and laugh. I can remember the guys would be talking around, 'Here comes old Bigfoot.' He'd go, *'Shh-shh!'*"

"They would tease him?" I asked.

"Yeah, yeah. The other guys would give him hell about it. He didn't want to talk about it back then."

In the winter of 1970, Falon, Bob Heironimus, Gary Record, Bun Hammermeister, and Russ Bohannon drove down to Reno in Russ Bohannon's car. "Most of those guys were roofing, and they weren't working, so we took off for Reno for a week. I can remember them giving him a bad time in the car. He'd just go, *'Shh-shh-shh!'*"

"Did he admit to anyone in the tavern that he wore the suit?"

"I remember someone told me that Bob wore the suit."

"You don't remember Bob publicly admitting it?"

"He'd never admit it publicly." He eased down in his chair and intertwined his fingers.

"Did you feel Bob played Bigfoot in the film?"

"Oh, yeah." He smiled. "He never would say he *didn't* do it. He'd just say, 'Yeah, sure guys.' Just shrugged it off. It just seemed he didn't want to look like he was the guilty one. But we all knew, and we just laughed at him."

I put Falon on the spot. "Because Bob didn't say to *you* back then that he wore the suit, why did you believe he did?"

Bob Heironimus was often teased by his friends for wearing the Bigfoot suit. He asked them to keep what he did a secret so that he could collect one thousand dollars. *Left to right:* Gary Record, Bob Heironimus, Russ Bohannon, Bernard Hammermeister (Reno, Nevada, 1970). Courtesy of Jim Falon.

"Just from personally knowing him and then watching the way Bigfoot moved on TV when I seen the movie, and just word of mouth from the other guys, and Bob never actually coming out and sayin' it was *not* him. And I knew Roger pretty well. I wouldn't put it past Roger to put up a scam like that."

Falon was agreeable to let Pat take his picture for the book. She pulled her camera from her bag.

"You've known Bob since age fifteen. You've concluded that he's an *honest* man?"

"Yep. No problem."

"Why do you say he's an honest man?"

"Because he has no reason to lie to me."

"Have you ever caught him in a lie?"

"No."

"I mean, a serious lie, not a joke."

"Not a joking lie." He shook his head. "No, I've never—"

"Has anyone said to you Bob Heironimus is dishonest or a liar?"

"No."

"Has anyone given you examples of him being dishonest or lying?"

"No."

Flash! from Pat's camera.

He pressed his thumbs together. "Honker worked for a cow ranch, Hansen Fruit Ranch, at Harrah for ten years. I took over Bob's job when he finished. There was never nothin'."

By "nothin'" Falon meant that Heironimus had every opportunity to take advantage of his employer. For ten years, explained Falon, Heironimus had full reign of the business: the company's credit cards, large amounts of cash, and the payroll. "Never. No problem there. That's another way to verify my personal opinion of him."

Flash!

Bob also went to weekend rodeos with Falon and the other team ropers, and all of the men, bachelors then, ate at a restaurant nearly every weekend for five years. They also partied together. "We were around him all the time, and buddies don't lie to each other, and back then everybody took care of everybody."

"During all those years, did you *ever* hear him tell a tall tale about himself?"

"No, no. The only thing I can remember is he once boasted he was a world champion roper." He laughed shrilly. He then added that in 1999 Bob approached him and said, "'You know, I wore that suit.' He asked me if I remembered him talking about it at the tavern. I said, 'No. Because I wasn't there.'"

"When he told you this two years ago, was your immediate reaction that he *did* wear the suit?"

"Right. Without a doubt. I have no doubts. I just looked at him, 'Well, Honker, you have one problem. If you don't have the suit, you're going to have a lot of trouble with certain people—like professors and stuff—convincing them. But you did do a good job.'" He exploded in high-pitched laughter.

Flash! Flash!

"I have some pictures to show you." He leaped up and quickly retrieved some photos from another room. He laid them on the table. Several showed Bob, Falon, and their friends on their Reno trip. Another showed one of Patterson's wagons hitched two four ponies. Two figures in western garb sat on the front of the wagon. "That's me driving and my brother Ray holding a shotgun. We drove it in a parade."

"Can I borrow these for the book?" I asked.

"Sure."

I carefully placed the photos into a folder.

"After Patterson died, did the Bigfoot sightings in the community end?"

He nodded. "There was no more sightings."

Falon said that since age five he had ridden in the mountains and had never seen a Bigfoot track. But as a rancher, he had seen plenty of cow tracks in the mountains since he spends 90 percent of his time following cattle on their travels. "I mean, that's your life—you're riding, looking at the ground," he said.

"So when Patterson gets interested in Bigfoot, Bigfoot starts showing up in the valley?" I said.

"Yep. All of a sudden there are sightings. You know, I remember I had a pair of slippers back then."

"Slippers?" Pat and glanced at each other.

"Funny! Yeah, I had them suckers! I flopped around with them. In fact, we used to go to costume parties, and I wore them with my costumes. They looked just like human feet."

"Really?"

"Yep. They were made from rubber. They had a liner inside where you put your foot. Big red, orange, and yellow floppy slippers."

"Can you draw me a picture?" I handed him my pen.

On my pad, he sketched the slippers in top and side views. "They had toes, just like a foot's. The slippers were long." He leaned over and positioned his hand several inches beyond the toe of the boot he wore. "About this long."

I lay the pad of paper lengthwise next to his boot. "About fourteen inches long," I said. My throat caught. "That just so happens to be the length of the tracks that Patterson's Bigfoot supposedly left behind."

"Oh."

I questioned him in depth about the slippers.

On the bottom of the slippers were treads or lines running sideways. When he wore the slippers outside, their impressions in the dust reminded him of Bigfoot tracks. "I remember thinking you'd have to get rid of the tread to make them work. I had the slippers for years. Sandy! Do you remember those slippers?"

Sandy, his wife, called from another room, "They're either thrown away or in the garage."

"I had them for years. I know I had them before I got married in 1974."

"Very interesting." Here was evidence, at least, that large, footlike slippers existed commercially. But were they produced in 1967?

Falon agreed to more photos of him mounted on one of his horses. We walked into the bright sunlight, and he saddled a brown horse named Checkers. He tapped his cowboy hat on his head, and I roamed about, photographing him.

"Have Bob walk," he said from his perch on the horse's back. He flashed a huge smile. "The way he swings his arms when he walks, and his head's right there." He craned his neck forward. "It's always forward. Look at his shoulders. Look the way his shoulders are sloped. You know, Bob broke his hip in a car wreck coming from Harrah."

"Really?" My ears perked at this bit of spontaneous information.

"Yep. Russ Bohannon was driving. Drunk. One of those foolish nights. Bob should have got killed. Took Bob a year to recuperate. He was on crutches."

I wondered when Bob broke his hip. If it was *before* October 1967, could he have even played the Bigfoot? I made a mental note.

With the roll finished, I reached up and shook Falon's hand and thanked him for the interview. "I'm going to go down and practice roping. Nice to have met you." He gently nudged Checkers with his boot heels.

We slid into the car, which was broiling inside. I started the engine and turned on the air conditioner. As we drove away from Falon's house, sweat pouring onto my forehead, I pulled to a stop next to his practice grounds. Astride Checkers, Falon was in hot pursuit of a mechanical metal calf affixed to the end of a motor-driven arm that rotated around a metal post. He was tossing a lasso at the calf's legs that were swinging up and down. We watched for a few minutes and then continued on.

"Bob's story is coming into clear focus," I said. I drove through a cloud of dust drifting up from the practice grounds. "He was a member a close-knit group of cowboys who he confided in one night, probably after more than a few drinks, about his role in Patterson's hoax. He regretted it. He wanted to get that thousand dollars, and he had broken his agreement with Patterson. He tried to keep it quiet, but the secret was out. His friends knew him too well not to believe him. They knew he was telling the truth."

In town we checked into the Big Valley Motel. That evening Pat and I ate dinner under an umbrella-shaded table on the deck of Tequila's, a popular Mexican restaurant at Track 29 and West Yakima Avenue.

I said, "Look at what we know so far. No evidence Bob has ever sought publicity these past thirty-four years regarding his role in Patterson's film. No evidence that he's dishonest. Friends who've known him for forty, fifty years say he's honest. No evidence Bob has a rich imagination or a tendency to fantasize. He seems to be what he appears to be, a simple, down-to-earth, honest man."

"So, do you believe him now?" Pat bit into a corn chip.

I shifted uneasily in my chair. "Like I've said before, I look at this whole case like a prosecutor. Where's the material proof? All we have is Bob's word."

"But, honey." Pat sipped water from her glass. "Why didn't he try and sell his story years ago when he was young and a risk taker and when Patterson's film had so much publicity? If he was a liar, that was the perfect time. Why lie now when has so much to lose?"

"You know. . . ." I tightened my jaws. "I, I actually—"

Our waitress appeared and we ordered.

I silently looked at the other customers under their umbrellas. "I just wish we had the damn suit! I just wish we had another confession to back up Bob's story."

"Maybe that's the way it will always be. Just Bob."

"Yeah." I chewed on my lip in thought. "I know there've been crimes solved on a confession and only circumstantial evidence. You know. . . ." I looked at her. "I, I believe him. I believe Bob."

"Finally!" Pat said.

"I believe him, but I always feel. . . ." I felt myself sinking into a dark depression. "I have this habit of always putting myself into the shoes of an attorney or a detective or a scientist. I'm trying to be as objective and as fair and as detached and as neutral as possible—and I have to say, 'Where's the corroborating witnesses?'"

"So, when we finish these interviews, you'll ask Bob Gimlin for his side of the story."

"Yeah. And Patty Patterson. And Al DeAtley."

The next morning we checked out of the motel and drove to Ahtanum Road to find Russ Bohannon, another of Bob's lifelong friends.

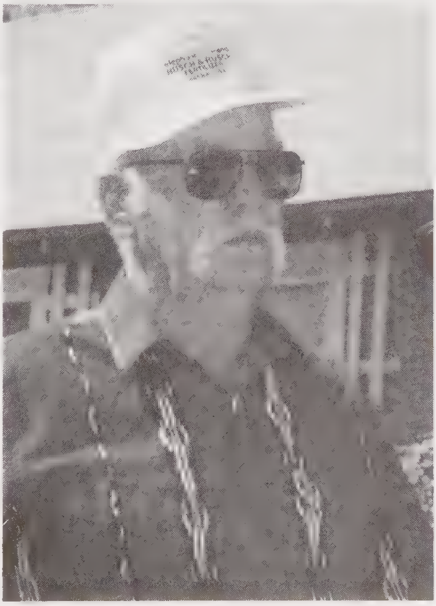
Coming upon Bohannon's mailbox, I swung the car to the right between two posts marking the entrance to a long, gravel driveway that lead to his house. Leaning against the posts were two life-size, plywood cutouts of a cowboy and a cowgirl. They wore real scarves. Peeling, white fences bordered both sides of the rut-lined driveway. The black eyeholes of a steer's skull nailed on a board stared at me as we glided to a stop in front of Bohannon's house.

"Wait here," I instructed Pat. I walked to the back of the house. Through the shadowy mesh of a screen door, the silhouette of a small figure pushing a vacuum cleaner moved back and forth in a sunlit room. I rapped hard on the door. "Hello!" The roaring vacuum cleaner drowned out my voice. I yanked the cord of a metal bell hanging next to the door. "Anybody home!"

The silhouette stopped moving and the vacuum cleaner whined down. A sparse woman with a surprised look on her face walked down several steps. She stared at me through the mesh. When I stated the reason for my visit, to talk to Russ Bohannon about Roger Patterson, a stricken expression spread across her face. Then, a large man loomed behind her on the top step. He bounded quickly down the stairs.

He confirmed that he was Russ Bohannon. I explained my project and that Bob Heironimus had confessed and that I was investigating Bob's honesty.

The screen door banged open, and the heels of Bohannon's stiff, tan-colored boots struck the wooden porch with a burst of explosive knocks. He wore a pair of blue jeans held in place by a carved leather belt and a large, brass buckle, a bright, burgundy short-sleeve shirt with white stripes, and a bright, white cap with a print of an elephant's head lording over the words HUSCH & HUSCH FERTLIZER,



Russ Bohannon learned that Bob Heironimus wore the Bigfoot suit when Heironimus personally told him in 1967–1968. "It wasn't something you'd forget," Bohannon said. "I had no reason not to believe him." Photo by Pat Long.

HARRAH, WASHINGTON. An impressive bushy, white mustache grew down past his mouth. Bohannon's eyes were hidden behind the lenses of a pair of dark sunglasses. "Bob told me he wore the suit more than thirty years ago!" he boomed as he stood like a monument in front of me.

I swallowed hard. "Really? Can I interview you?"

"Why, sure."

I suggested I interview him on his front lawn near the car where Pat was still patiently sitting. When we approached, she pushed herself out and shook Bohannon's hand. He and I stood on the lawn, and with his permission I started my recorder rolling.

I learned that Bohannon was, like other witnesses I had interviewed, a childhood friend of Bob Heironimus. Bohannon had grown up on a dairy farm south of Ahtanum. He met Bob, a year younger than him, at the Ahtanum Valley Elementary School. Bohannon dropped out of high school, but throughout his teens he continued to run around with Bob. "Car racin'," said Bohannon. "We had a lot in common."

Bohannon's Phillips 66 station in Ahtanum, which he bought in 1963 when he was twenty-three, became the meeting place for the local high school boys and men in their early twenties. "That was when guys drove small-block Chevrolets, everybody's favorite," he said. "I helped them hop up some of the cars."

In 1967 Bohannon was living on Rockstrom Road in Wiley City. It was sometime in 1968 or 1969 that Bohannon heard Bob confess he had worn the Bigfoot suit.

"We used to drink a little beer together. It was at one of those occasions."

"Could it have been at the Idle Hour Tavern?"

"There was also the Simcoe across the street," he said.

"Well, can you remember any of the details of what Bob said?" I squinted in the bright sunlight.

"No. He didn't give an awful lot of details. It was just very vivid in my memory when he said it. That was quite a revelation. It wasn't something you'd forget."

I tried to detect any unusual motion in Bohannon's eyes, but his dark glasses shaded them.

"Another fellow was told basically the same thing," Bohannon went on. "Bernard Hammermeister. If there was anybody else, I can't really recall, but Bun comes to mind."

"So, Bob told you over a beer in a tavern?"

"It could have been over a beer. It might have been when we were driving around. See, we used to go to Ellensburg on Sunday afternoons or Friday nights. We'd drink beer and drive around. We called them 'tours.' He might have told us on one of those occasions. It wasn't just drunken talk. He related the story."

"And you just don't remember the details?" I asked. Rivulets of sweat crawled down my scalp and trickled over my temples.

"No. He wasn't, I would say, particularly proud of the thing. He felt the deception."

"That is, he felt he had been involved in deception?"

He hooked his thumbs under his belt. "That's what it amounted to, you know. To me, that's the way I felt he felt—that he wasn't particularly proud of it."

"That was the attitude he was projecting in the conversation?"

"Yeah."

I turned to Pat who was standing near the car. I mouthed the word "camera." She nodded.

Bohannon's thoughts drifted. "I remember Bob and Glenda and me and my wife had a joint wedding reception at the Old Grange in Ahtanum. We got married within a couple of weeks of each other. Not long after that, they rented my house on Rockstrom Lane for about five years. They were extremely good renters. They paid good, they kept care of the house. He's been a responsible guy all of his life, other than what kids do at adolescent ages like we did."

"I understand. Do you remember a car crash? You were driving at the time."

"Oh, yeah." He rocked on his heels. I gestured at the camera in Pat's hand.

"It was in 1968. I was driving from Brownstown to Yakima. Bob and his brother Howard were in the car. I did a lot of drinking in my youth. We all did. We were coming from a tavern, drunk. I was driving a '67 Firebird 400. It was about ten months old and had fourteen thousand miles on it. We hit a power pole in excess of ninety miles an hour. I wasn't thrown out. They were. We didn't have on seat belts. I was layin' with one leg sticking through the window. It was crushed. Bob broke his leg, and Howard had a rib through a lung. They were both layin' in the ditch. That was the beginning of wisdom."

"Can we take your picture for the book?" I asked.

"Sure."

Pat began her familiar task, the camera whining and clicking.

"What was your reaction when Bob told you he wore the suit?"

"I believed him. He was that type of person. I knew Roger, and Roger wanted some recognition, and it wasn't coming. Roger was kind of looking for the easy way. And so when I heard Bob's story, it didn't surprise me that they were trying to promote the thing. I don't know if you notice Bob or not, but he kind of has long arms. He's built a little different. He was a big, stout guy when he was young. He was very athletic. When you look at that picture, it looks like Bob. It walks like him. That just kind of fortified what he told me."

"But you know, there are no corroborating witnesses, no suit, not even any photos of the suit. What caused you to believe him?"

"He's basically an honest person. He's not someone I would consider dishonest at all. Very straightforward. He was brought up good. He had good parents. It all comes down to the fact if I believed him or not when he said it. And I did. I had no reason *not* to believe him."

I asked him if he had heard anyone in the community call Heironimus a liar.

"No. Bob has a good reputation."

"Are there any examples you can cite of him committing crimes?"

"No. He was a standup guy. He was a decent boy."

When Bohannon volunteered a statement that he had never come across a Bigfoot track when he had hunted deer and elk as a young man, I wasn't surprised.

We talked some more, and then Bohannon looked toward the house. His wife was standing on the porch. "I'm afraid I have to end this. My wife and I are going out to get a bite to eat. All that I can say is that's the way I recollected it."

He gave me a hearty handshake. I thanked him, and Pat and I retreated to the car for the comfort of the air conditioner, which I switched on. "Man!" I cried out as my fingers touched the red-hot steering wheel. As we bounced behind the Bohannons' huge pickup truck onto Ahtanum Road, merciful cool air finally started blowing.

On First Street, we sat inside a Taco Bell and over tacos, burritos, and cold drinks chock-full of ice, we reviewed Bohannon's story. Then with renewed energy, we drove to Bob's house. I wanted to tie up final loose ends. I just couldn't shake the fact that he had originally told me that he had met up with Patterson and Gimlin at Willow Creek. I felt he must have met them at Weitchpec.

At the kitchen table, I opened with, "Your trip to Northern California to wear the suit. Was that the single and *only* trip you ever made to California?"

"That's the only time I've been to California in my life," Bob answered.

"Have you been to California since then?"

"No."

"Before then?"

"No. I did go through Susanville, California, when I went that one time to Reno, but no."

Once again, like a broken record, he repeated how Patterson had given him verbal instructions to travel to the rendezvous point after he passed through Happy Camp. "'Go through Happy Camp.' Or the next town—whatever it was. 'Just as you come into town, you can't miss it. There's a service station.'"

When he finished describing his meeting with Gimlin and Patterson, I asked him, "Bob, do you feel your memory has been playing any tricks on you with some of the stuff you've been telling me the last eight months? Have you said to yourself, 'I'm wrong on this or that?'"

His chair creaked. "Well, I thought about it. Basically, I *told* you it was very simple. This is what I done. This is what I remember. And that's the way it happened. I mean, that's it." Irritated, his voice rose. "I don't know where I stopped to take a leak at between Yreka and Happy Camp, California, stuff like that."

Pat and I laughed. Glenda, standing at her usual place, laughed, too.

"Well, Bob," I said as I hunched forward with my elbows on the table, "the phenomenon I'm experiencing with you is that time has passed."

"A long time." His eyelids drooped. "You know, as you get older, you remember things better, I think. Back then, I was a kid, going here, going there, running here, running there. I didn't give a shit, you know. I never really sat down and thought, 'Now, wait a minute,' or really analyzed it. I just didn't care."

"Nor did you write anything down," I added.

"Right. I thought I was smart. I *trusted* them."

"And you're sticking by your story?"

"That's right. Here about a month, when it's dark, when I go to work, just starting with the sun coming up, ask the boys at Pepsi to watch me come across the parking lot. They'll tell you. Everybody says, 'Oh, all you have to do is watch him walk every morning.'" He looked at me hard and said: "Now you're convinced, right?"

I cleared my throat. "I struggle as a writer. I only have your word for this. But. . . ." I shook my head. "I wish I had that suit. But. . . ." I looked hard into his eyes. "Bob, I believe you're telling the truth."

Relief passed over his face. A moment of silence elapsed. I felt relieved, too.

"There's a person who I still haven't interviewed, who I'd like to," I said. "You, Glenda."

"Me?" She was startled.

"Yes. How long were you and Bob going together before he told you he wore the Bigfoot suit?"

She thought. "I don't know. Probably late 1969 or early 1970. We were married in September of 1970, and I know I knew it by then."

"What was your reaction?"

"I don't remember."

"I mean, did you believe him?"

"Sure, I believed him. I didn't have any reason not to believe him."

Her memory was that she knew little or nothing about Patterson's footage. "I think I'd seen the clip, but I never paid any attention to it because it meant nothing to me." She thought that Bob might have said, one day when the footage was shown on television, "'That's me, in the suit.'" But she just couldn't remember the exact circumstances.

"So you *did* believe him?"

"I think I probably did because I knew he was an honest guy, and he had no reason to lie to me about it."

I pressed her. "You had no reason to doubt the story, and ever since you've never doubted it, correct?"

"Right."

"He hasn't had any instances of spinning tall tales since you've known him?"

She looked fondly at him. He looked sheepishly up at her from his position in his chair. "I don't think so," she said softly. She gazed into his eyes lovingly.

I turned to Bob. "Let's talk a little about my next step." I told him that after completing a chapter, I would call a few more of the people he had named, and then I'd call Gimlin, DeAtley, and Patty Patterson.

"I want them to comment on your story. If they believe you're lying, then they need to tell me why. I want both sides of this story."

"OK," he said. "I have no problem with that."

"Well, Pat and I need to get going."

As usual, Pat and I found ourselves lingering in the living room. Out of curiosity I asked Bob, "Is your mortality part of all of this? Have you thought, 'What if I die and I never tell the story'?"

He cocked his head which rested on the back of his recliner. "Could be. I don't know. I never thought of it that way. It's just *time* people found out the truth."

As far as his mortality went, he said he was on medication for mildly elevated blood pressure, and he had possible rotator cuff tear in his shoulders from years of labor. Beyond the pain in his shoulders, he felt fine. His desire to speak out had more to do with what he saw on television.

"I see Bigfoot on television all the time. I even see Bigfoot walking through the brush with a case of beer. I see him with a can of Mountain Dew. I see him with big feet plastered all around the country. I get *nothing* for that. I was the guy that done all the work!"

We said good-bye, and as we drove away from his house, I said to Pat, "We're getting close to the end."

Back in Mill Creek, I called Gary Hansen of Hansen Fruit and Cattle. Heironimus had worked for him for ten years. I wasn't surprised with what I heard.

"He told you he wore this suit?" Hansen said, surprised. "I'd heard he had participated in the Bigfoot thing. He and I would spend a lot of time together. I'd always ding him a little about it. He was pretty close-mouthed."

And Bob's honesty?

"Bob is honest as the day is long. He really was a tremendous employee who I totally trusted. Ran the whole thing. A good guy. He had total authority. He handled up to $150,000."

Hansen had known Bob since high school. "He was around the house a lot. He was a family friend."

"In all of those years growing up with him, did you see any sign that he was a teller of tall tales or that he played tricks on people?"

"No, not at all. I think Roger was looking for finances to go on with his little program there. He had to come up with something."

I thanked him and called Mike Trammel, Bob's manager at Noel Corporation.

Trammel was quick to say that he had known Bob for eighteen years, starting the day Bob was hired. And he had known of Bob's story for at least ten years. "Oh, the guys at work have known about it forever. And if you ask him about it and what really happened, he'll tell you."

Bob never sought attention at work, Trammel said. "He has a good work ethic. He's well-liked. And I don't know him to be a B.S.-er by any means."

When the *Yakima Herald* story of the anonymous Man in the Bigfoot Suit was published in 1999, Heironimus sat down with Trammel. "That's when he actually told me personally the story. I believe him."

"And on what do you base that?"

"Just knowing him. I've never heard the guy lie about anything. If he hadn't done it, he wouldn't have said he did."

Trammel wished me luck with the book.

I found Pat at the kitchen table slipping photographs of people we had interviewed into plastic sheets. She blinked up at me with bleary eyes.

"I've made a decision," I announced. "I'm going to tie up a few more loose ends, and then I'm going to call Bob Gimlin."

One of those loose ends was the irritating issue of when the Bluff Creek film was actually taken. Not only was there *no proof* that the film was shot on October 20, 1967, but I had established that it was extremely unlikely that Al DeAtley could have processed the film in forty-eight hours in time to show it for the first time on October 22. Gimlin's statements that Green had recorded in his video interview in 1992,[1] and the statements Green, Merritt, and Bob Heironimus made to me, provided the most probable time frame in which the film was shot.

In the video interview, Gimlin told Green how he and Patterson ended up traveling down to Bluff Creek to look for Bigfoot in the fall of 1967. Gimlin said that in the "last part of August and the first part of September [1967]," he and Patterson returned to Yakima from a Bigfoot field trip in the Mount St. Helens area in Washington state. Upon their return, Patterson discovered that Al Hodgson, the local Bigfoot hunter in Willow Creek, had called to notify Patterson that Bigfoot tracks had been found on new roads under construction in the Bluff Creek area. Gimlin was between construction jobs, and he told Patterson he could take off "'a couple of weeks'" to go down to Bluff Creek, although he "'wasn't real anxious'" to go because he needed to go back to work. Gimlin told Green: "I cannot recall the exact amount of time I was going to stay down there with him, but we stayed longer than I'd planned on staying. In fact, we stayed a week longer than I planned." As best as Gimlin recollected, he and Patterson stayed in the Bluff Creek area *three weeks*.

A clue as to when Gimlin and Patterson actually ended up at Bluff Creek to look at the Bigfoot tracks Hodgson reported can be found in Gimlin's statement to Green: "*Just prior to the time* [emphasis added] we had gotten there, they [construction workers building roads in the Bluff Creek area] had sighted tracks on that Tuesday after being off over the Labor Day weekend." Checking a reference calendar in my phone book, I discovered that Labor Day in 1967 fell on a Monday, September 4. Gimlin's key phrase was, "Just prior to the time we had gotten there." Did Gimlin and Patterson arrive in Bluff Creek a few days *after September 4*?

Green supports Gimlin's statement of a September Patterson-Gimlin trip to Bluff Creek. In his book *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*, Green states that in "late August" of 1967 he received a phone call from Syl McCoy in Willow Creek that tracks had appeared above Bluff Creek on Onion Mountain.[2] When Green arrived in the Bluff Creek area *shortly after the call* to inspect the tracks, he met Hodgson. Green states in the Gimlin interview: "I saw the tracks you're [Gimlin] referring to, and when I was there Al Hodgson told me he was expecting Roger . . . well, maybe he'd called him already by then. . . . I took that to mean that Roger already had a trip planned before that [before Hodgson called, or before the tracks at Bluff Creek were found]."

Green's statement to Gimlin, "I saw the tracks you're [Gimlin] referring to," provides the strongest clue as to when Patterson and Gimlin arrived in Bluff Creek. In his book, Green describes what he saw when he traveled to Bluff Creek twice in late August. On his second trip to Bluff Creek, *near the Labor Day weekend*, Green saw tracks on a road under construction on Blue Creek Mountain that were impressed into soft dust. Big drops of rain had fallen on them, and, wrote Green, "all the tracks were cast in a delicate skin of dried mud."[3] These were the tracks that Hodgson had reported to Patterson, and which Patterson and Gimlin wanted to see. But when they arrived, Gimlin told Green, the tracks were nothing but "'*globs of mud*' [emphasis added]." Gimlin also said that before he and Patterson arrived at Bluff Creek, "It had also started raining."

Merritt provides additional evidence that Patterson and Gimlin traveled to Bluff in *September*. Merritt told me in his November 1998 interview that Patterson, with Gimlin, stopped by early one morning to beg him to go with them to California. "I was supposed to go with him [Patterson]," said Merritt, "but there were mud slides and rain." Merritt's statement always puzzled me because the conventional story was that the weather was *warm, dry, and sunny* when Patterson and Gimlin rode into the Bluff Creek area, except on the morning of October 21 when a storm supposedly inundated Bluff Creek.

Bob Heironimus provides additional evidence that Patterson and Gimlin most likely traveled to Bluff Creek in September. He told me he drove to the Bluff Creek area in either *September* or October 1967. He recalled seeing a rodeo banner stretched across the highway that led into Happy Camp. I asked Pat to do some research, and she discovered from the local Chamber of Commerce in Happy Camp that the town holds an annual Bigfoot Jamboree on *Labor Day weekend*. The Labor Day weekend celebration began as a square dance celebration in 1966. It was continued in 1967 and continues to this day. "What that man saw in 1967," Ivan Hyde, a Happy Camp local historian, told Pat, "was probably the Bigfoot Jamboree banner. This whole area isn't rodeo country."

Now, recall that Gimlin stated that he stayed in the Bluff Creek area *approximately three weeks* before he returned to Yakima. If he and Patterson arrived in Bluff Creek *the first few days after Labor Day*, Gimlin would have arrived home in *the last week of September*. Yet, according to the Humboldt *Times Standard*, Patterson and Gimlin "arrived to look for tracks" in the Bluff Creek area on *October 14*. According to the anonymous reporter, "Patterson has visited the area *before* and *last month* [i.e., September; emphasis added] received word of the latest discovery of the giant footprints. . . ."[4] Yet, if we count back *three weeks from October 20*, when Patterson shot his film, Gimlin and Patterson would have arrived in Bluff Creek *not* on October 14, as the *Times Standard* reported, but on *October 1*.

Would the Bigfoot tracks that looked like "globs of mud," which Patterson and Gimlin came to see, even *exist* on October 1? Most likely not. The muddy tracks were "fragile," Green wrote, and when Green saw them, half of them had already been wiped out by the road construction equipment.[5] It would be foolish to assume that *any* tracks formed by Bigfoot on Labor Day, September 4, would still exist a month later, *if* Patterson and Gimlin did arrive on October 1.

So, did Patterson and Gimlin stay in the Bluff Creek area for three weeks in September, as Gimlin implies, or for one week in October as the *Times Standard* states? Conceivably, could Patterson and Gimlin have visited Bluff Creek *twice*, as Heironimus suggested to me, once to scout the area in September, the second time in October to shoot the film? However, if Heironimus saw the Bigfoot Jamboree banner stretched across the highway upon his entrance into Happy Camp *around the time of the Labor Day weekend*, then Patterson shot his film *long before* October 20. This earlier date would have provided plenty of time for Patterson to have the film processed by Kodak in Palo Alto. On Patterson and Gimlin's second trip to Bluff Creek in *mid-October*, they would have *pretended* to look for Bigfoot for nearly a week, then after casting fake Bigfoot tracks on October 20, rushed into Willow Creek to tell Hodgson their story, contacted the local reporter, babbled further with the locals about their sighting, and then packed up early the next morning and "gotten out of town." No one would have known that weeks before, perhaps as much as *seven weeks*, the film had been shot, mailed, and processed. Thus, when Patterson told Heironimus at the camp after the filming that, "We have to go back and make tracks," this statement could very well have referred to *going back many weeks later*, a second trip in October, to make the tracks. We cannot forget that Gimlin was between construction jobs, and he had only two weeks, which dragged into three, to give to Patterson. All of these facts would account for the mystery of the Bluff Creek film being processed as quickly as it had been. In fact, all these facts pointed to how the hoax was successfully executed.

"It's time to call Gimlin," I announced one day to Pat. "I could keep calling Heironimus's friends, neighbors, and former employers for another year to catch him in a lie. I don't think I ever will. I believe he's telling the truth. But if he's lying, Gimlin should be able to convince me."

Over several evenings, I prepared questions for Gimlin. On one of those evenings, Pat cried out to me. "Come here! Pat Mason has died!"

"What?" I rushed into our study.

"Larry Lund just posted this message." She read Lund's message out loud. Mason had died on August 8, at age ninety-three.

"Another one of the witnesses has died," I said glumly, sitting down. "Thank God we were able to meet Mason and get his story."

Pat's eyes glistened. I felt a void inside me. I reminded myself that Pat and Alta Mason had appeared to be deeply in love, and love was greater than death.

I turned my attention to preparing questions for DeAtley and Patty Patterson.

On September 11 at 6:15 A.M., I turned on the television and was immediately confronted by an image of a burning skyscraper. Puzzled, I listened, and then recoiled in shock and horror. Fear flooded me, and I woke up Pat. I was sobbing uncontrollably. "We've been attacked!"

For the next week I went through the motions of work, dazed and numb. Pat woke up one night screaming.

Finally, on September 18, I settled down enough to call Bob Gimlin. My heart was pounding as I punched in the numbers. I was about to speak to the only living human being on earth who had allegedly seen a Bigfoot that was caught on film.

I lucked out; he was at home. I asked for an interview. "Well, I don't want to be rude," he said in a soft, calm voice with the slow rhythms of country life, "but I'm not giving interviews anymore. I quit doing that some time ago. I've had problems with interviews I gave. I appreciate the fact that you're writing a book, and I wish you well."

I noticed that his tone was smooth, soothing, trusting, even reassuring.

"Well, then, let me ask you if you would comment on the following." I told him that Bob Heironimus was claiming that he wore a Bigfoot suit and played the Bigfoot in Patterson's film.

He responded in an even, disarming voice without hesitation, "Well, yeah, I can comment on that. I know Bob. He's been a friend of mine for a long time, but as far as I'm concerned, he was not there that I know of, and I don't think he was there at all. And probably he's tryin' to make a buck. These guys are coming out of the wall saying they've been in a suit down in Northern California."

Personally, I knew of no one but Heironimus who had made the claim.

I responded, "I've talked to friends who have known him since age five. I have no information that he's dishonest. I'm trying to get your side of this." I then gave him Heironimus's story in all its detail, starting with the moment Gimlin asked Heironimus if he wanted to wear the Bigfoot to Opal Heironimus's and John Miller's seeing the suit, and concluding with the removal of the suit from Opal's car.

Gimlin was unruffled. "I'd say the story Bob has come up with is pretty farfetched as far as I'm concerned. You know, I've confronted Bob on that. I've said 'Hey, what's going on?' But he won't talk to me about it. We're still friends. He just lives a little ways from me. I've worked with him, and I've done things with Bob. I've rode horses with him. But this thing that he's telling all the people around that he was in a suit in Northern California, it kind of just don't make much sense to me."

"So, you're saying he's lying?"

"I used to trust Bob a lot," he answered, the smooth surface of his voice now breaking under a slow-rolling wave of anger. "But then lately him and the whole family kind of prevaricates. They think things. You know, I don't like to make statements against my friends or neighbors, but this thing is kind of out of proportion as far as I'm concerned."

"So he would be lying?"

"As far as I'm concerned he is."

For the next forty-five minutes, we talked about Heironimus and his story. Gimlin remembered Bob and Howard Heironimus, Merritt, and others acting in Patterson's documentary near the South Fork. Gimlin himself rode an Appaloosa mare and wore an Indian wig for the film. But a Bigfoot costume was never mentioned, Gimlin insisted, and if Heironimus and Patterson had discussions about Heironimus wearing a Bigfoot suit, then Gimlin certainly wasn't part of it. In fact, Heironimus was never at Bluff Creek, and Gimlin denied again and again every aspect of Heironimus's story.

Why, I asked, if Heironimus was lying, was he risking his retirement and coming out with such a story? "Does he have a grudge against you?"

"Well, I don't know if Bob has a grudge against me." But, Gimlin suggested, Heironimus was "envious" of Gimlin's material possessions. "Bob just screws around working for ranches and stuff and didn't save much money, and he still don't. He spends money pretty rapidly as far as I can tell."

"Are you saying that he wants to make money off his story?" I asked.

"That's the way it looks to me."

"I can't find any evidence of Bob's being a liar," I said.

"I never thought of him as that either, but they didn't think Bundy [Ted Bundy, a famous Northwest serial killer] was bad either until they caught him and found out he was a bad guy. But you never know about a person's character until some things like this come out."

"You're standing by your story—you saw a real Bigfoot?"

"Well, I saw what's on that film, and I thought it was a real Bigfoot."

"And Bob Heironimus wasn't there with you on that day?"

"Not with me he wasn't."

"Let me ask you: Have you ever been arrested? I've got a case on a Robert E. Gimlin arrested for accepting stolen plywood and nails. Was that you?"

"No. Not me. There's about five Robert E. Gimlins."

"So, you've never been arrested for stealing stolen property?"

"I've never been arrested for anything, you know. In fact, I'm a good Christian man and I live a Christian life."

I thanked him and hung up. Puzzled, I rechecked my 1962 case file on Robert E. Gimlin. I noted that a William E. Gimlin and a Dola Gimlin, as sureties, had posted a bond for $3,000 on behalf of Robert E. Gimlin. Each of their signatures, including that of Robert E. Gimlin, was on the bail bond. Inquisitive, I phoned Lillie Gimlin in Yakima, who I discovered was Bob Gimlin's sister-in-law. I described my book project and that Bob didn't give interviews and that I was trying to discover the identities of William E. and Dola Gimlin.

"They're Bob Gimlin's parents. They are no longer alive."

"Thank you."

I drove to the University of Washington library and using *Polk's Yakima City*

Directory,[6] I found listings for William E. and Dola Gimlin (Wapato residents, 1953–1955, 1961–1967); city firefighter Robert Gimlin (Wapato resident, 1961); Robert E. Gimlin (Wapato resident, 1964, 1965); Bob and Judith Gimlin (Union Gap, 1966, 1967). I could find no other Robert Gimlins residing in Yakima County.

I drove home and compared the signature of the Robert E. Gimlin named on the bail bond to the signature of the Robert E. Gimlin published in Bigfooter Danny Perez's *BigfooTimes* newsletter commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Patterson film. The signatures matched. It appeared to me that Bob Gimlin had lied about being arrested.

A few days later Al DeAtley answered my phone call. He agreed to be taped.

I wanted to resolve some issues, I said. One issue was the $75,000 that was used to operate Northwest Research, as reported by *Reader's Digest*. "It came from me," DeAtley said, "right after the filming. It was for promotion of my brother-in-law's cause, I guess."

When I had interviewed reserved Bigfooter Green, he had argued that Patterson couldn't have hoaxed the film because surely Patterson would have used the money he made from the film to live an affluent lifestyle. Instead, Patterson pumped his earnings back into his search for Bigfoot.

"Roger never worked," DeAtley responded in his rough-edged voice. "He didn't have a job. He was on welfare. He spent the $75,000 on his family, wife, and three kids." Silence. Then he said, "Roger believed in Bigfoot. I'm a little concerned that he became involved in the fact that, 'I got to prove it even though I've got to cheat, lie, and steal to do it.'"

"I've been coming across evidence that he *did* cheat, lie, and steal."

"But that doesn't make him a bad guy."

Shocked, I managed to let out, "It doesn't make him a bad guy if he cheated, lied, and stole?"

"No, no. He was human."

I tried to accept DeAtley's defense of his brother-in-law, but I couldn't. I finally regained my composure. "You can't trust the word of someone who cheats, lies and steals," I said.

"I understand that. I told you before. Do I believe in it [Patterson's film]? No. Did I ever ask? No. Did I want to know? No. Do I believe Roger had the ability to fake it? Yes. Did he fake it? I don't know."

I told him about the news story announcing the Big Foot Ball scheduled to take place on October 20, 1967. His wife's photo was in the story. He didn't remember going to the ball, and he hastily added that his wife had no part in Patterson's Bigfoot project.

"She thought it was rather crazy," DeAtley said. "She was mad at me because I invested money—uh, was giving money to perpetuate the hoax. My wife is extremely embarrassed about it. She's kind of—oh, how—she's, uh, a person who likes to be—always has been—in the mainstream of life, and stayed out of the shadows. And I've not always been too concerned about that. I'm a reasonably influential person in Yakima, and so it doesn't matter if I'm in the shadows every once in the while on certain issues." He chuckled dryly. I found myself hypnotized by his statements.

"I wasn't a believer in Bigfoot," he continued. "So as I went down this bullshit world there prior to Roger's death, I was trying to fund or help Roger fund himself. Through all his trials and tribulations, I was a 'legitimate'—quote, unquote—businessman doing his normal thing, and Roger was a con artist who was trying to do *his* thing."

"Yes, people have told me he was a con artist, that he didn't pay his bills."

"Knowing Roger, he didn't pay his bills because he wasn't trying to cheat you, or, er, he totally believed in Bigfoot, in his whole mind. He was a dreamer who said, 'I'm gonna make it big one day. Don't worry about it. I'll pay you back. I've got this *big deal* going'—du-dah, du-dah, du-dah—whatever it was, the goats, the wagons, whatever. He said, 'Don't worry about it. You're covered.'"

I told him Vilma Radford's story. When I concluded it, I said, "And Roger never paid back the money she loaned him. So how does that square with his big plans that he was going to pay people back?"

He chortled. "I don't think Roger had two nickels to rub together in his entire life, *ever.* I don't think he ever had a hundred dollar bill in his pocket in his life. Somehow he learned to live in that world of his."

"And he lost interest in his businesses."

"He lost interest quite quickly," said DeAtley.

"But not Bigfoot."

"I think he thought that was the mother lode."

I directed the conversation to the mystery of where the film had been processed. "As far as how the film was shipped to you," I said, "I've discovered that Ralph Richardson, the pilot you said might have flown to Northern California to pick up the film, wasn't even in the U.S. at the time."

"I remember Roger's phone call from California," he replied. "I do not recall what he said. I don't know what I said. I remember showing the film in my basement. With all due respect, everything in between is gone from my mind. The memory banks in there are totally clogged."

"I figure you would have had to drive to True Color in Seattle on Saturday, October 21, and plop down a thousand dollars to have the film processed."

"That didn't happen," he said emphatically. "I was involved with Roger for only one reason—because of my wife. I was talked into being involved in things that I normally wouldn't have been. Outside of the family, I wouldn't have done any of this stuff. If I ever write my memoirs, it would be unexplainable. I don't know why I did it. Roger was a nice guy, he was a super salesman."

DeAtley picked up the thread of the film processing mystery. "When you have a *passion* for something, you—you can remember everything about it." But in this case, he said, he had no passion for Bigfoot, and that was why he couldn't remember handling the film.

"This is such a gaping hole in all of this!" I said in frustration.

He laughed gruffly. "Hey! I was not the plot. I mean, I was not the person that did it. I have no idea."

I told him that Bob Heironimus had confessed to me that he had worn the Bigfoot suit for a thousand dollars and that later he had approached DeAtley at the Saddle Tree and asked when he was going to get paid.

DeAtley was unflustered. "It sounds like something I might have done. I've been there [at the Saddle Tree], and I knew Bob through Roger."

I perked up. "So that we make sure we're talking about the same guy. . . ." I said.

"He had one bad eye," said DeAtley.

"That's right. That's Heironimus."

I asked him why he thought Heironimus approached him.

"I would have assumed that that meant he and Roger had a deal, and he and Roger had to work it through. I would have told him, 'Fuck you. Go see Roger.'"

Try as he might, DeAtley just couldn't remember when and where he first met Heironimus.

"Well, Bob says he wore the suit," I said, "and after the hoax film was shot, the film was put in a box, and Roger told Bob to mail the box to you, and he did."

"I don't doubt that at all," he said. "It could have happened." But he had no memory of receiving the film. "My memory banks just don't bring it up. I had a business going and—and this was what at most was a distraction."

I explained that given the time it took to process Kodachrome II film, Patterson's story of airmailing it to DeAtley must have been a lie.

"Absolutely possible," DeAtley said.

"Why did Roger want to send the film to you?"

"I have no idea." He laughed. "Unless he thought I was a service provider to get it developed or whatever. Hell, I don't know."

"Well, Heironimus has confessed. Roger was a shadowy guy, and I can't pin down when the film was processed, and no one has filmed a Bigfoot since Roger Patterson."

"I believe they never will again!" he cried out, then burst into guttural laughter. "I never wanted to know if it was a hoax. I don't want to know, and I never got myself into a position to know or not to know. I didn't want to be part of something that I assumed was happening."

"Something" that was "happening"? His selection of words was intriguing.

"Well," I concluded, "I'll always be really puzzled about how you remember so much about Roger, but that one area is so empty—the film and your handling of it."

He broke into laughter. "It's a *fact*. OK, big guy. Talk to you later."

"Thank you. Good-bye."

I sat and rubbed my eyes and realized how disgusted I was becoming with the Patterson story. It stank to high heaven. The next evening I called Patty Patterson. I asked her for an interview. "The book seems incomplete without one," I said.

"No," she said angrily, "I won't do an interview, and I've heard many times what you're up to."

I was taken aback. "Oh. I'm not sure what I'm up to beyond writing a book."

She was silent.

"Well, I wonder if you might comment on the following." Briefly, I told her that Bob Heironimus was claiming that he wore the Bigfoot suit in Patterson's film.

She said nothing. Finally, after a minute of silence, she hung up. I immediately called her back.

"Mrs. Patterson, do you have a comment on Bob Heironimus's story? He says he wore a Bigfoot suit in your husband's film."

She said harshly, "It's pretty easy for him to say or anybody to say things about someone who isn't here to defend himself."

"I want to make certain I got everyone's point of view on his claim."

She laughed cynically. "Look into his background."

"I've been doing that. I've been talking to his friends."

"You haven't been very thorough then."

"Can you suggest someone I should talk to?"

"No. I'm not going to suggest nothin' to you. Good-bye." She hung up.

Over the next several weeks I wrote to Patty Patterson asking for an interview and her comment on the veracity of Heironimus's story. One of the three letters I sent came back stamped REFUSED. She never did respond to any of my requests.

On October 6, 2001, to fulfill my part of the bargain with Harvey Anderson, the former Yakima camera shop owner, Pat and I sat down with him at a Starbucks in Kirkland to allow him to comment on his story that I had written. I noticed that his initials on his ivory dress shirt pocket were monogrammed. He scowled and pursed his lips as he listened to every word I read.

When I finished, I corrected a few minor details, but his story hadn't changed. He swore to the truth of it—that Patterson had visited his shop multiple times in 1961 to purchase and rent camera equipment to create a fake Bigfoot film using a gorilla suit. "I have nothing to gain from telling this story." He scrunched up his mouth and a cool look filled his eyes. "I've been telling the story to family for years. I'm finally coming forward because I hate to see bullshit pedaled the way it has been. It's a big farce."

On October 13, 2001, Pat and I visited Bob and Glenda in their kitchen where I read to them Bob's story. Although he suggested minor changes, at the end of the four-hour reading session, he accepted every word.

All four of us gathered in the living room. No, he didn't have any Bigfoot books in his house, he said from his recliner. He did have some videotapes of televised Bigfoot programs he and Glenda had copied over the past two years. With his permission, I played Patterson's Bigfoot film to elicit his response.

Beyond saying, "That's when I turned and looked at 'em," Bob had little to say about the clip.

"Well, we've come to the end of the story," I said, removing the cassette. "The story has to end. I have to ask the big question."

"'Are you telling the truth?'" he asked for me.

I laughed. "Well, I have to ask you the question again. I've interviewed you over a nine-month period, Bob, and . . . *are you telling the truth?* Did you wear a Bigfoot suit in Roger Patterson's famous Bigfoot film in Northern California?"

"Yes, I did," he said in a quiet but firm voice. "And I have a question for you."

"OK."

"Do you believe me?"

"Yes, I believe you."

"There you go. End of story." He grinned.

"One more question." I selected my words carefully. "Because this story is controversial, do you have concerns about the repercussions telling your story is going to have on your personal life?"

"Yes, I do." He swallowed. "Well, I'm not a very good talker to people. I'm not very good with the media. I'll probably faint or have a heart attack. I hate. . . ." He fought his emotions. "You know, if somebody. . . . If you call me a liar, I'd probably smack you. I, I'm an honest person. I know people are going to call me a liar. People are going to attack me *for telling the truth*. That's stupid." He growled, "For telling the truth, I'm sure there are going to be repercussions."

His eyebrows knitted. "I know I wore the suit. All these people around here know it was me. *You* know it was me. And have someone say, 'Well, you're a liar.' Like Gimlin. He was right *there*. We've been friends. We see each other off and on four or five times a year or more. And for him to tell you I'm a liar, it hurts my feelings, you know. I told him I was going to tell the truth. He said, 'Well, don't mention my name.' Well, how could I *not*?"

He fell into serious reflection. "Ask me six months after the book is out if I'd do it again, I might say, 'Go to hell! It ain't worth it. It's too many problems. Too many repercussions.' Or maybe I will say, 'You're damn right! It's the truth! Why not?' You just don't know. You got to weigh what the outcome's going to be."

And so the last of my interviews came to an end. As Pat and I stood up, so did Bob and Glenda. I noticed large red letters on the back of Bob's T-shirt: "I LIVE WITH FEAR ALL THE TIME. BUT SOMETIMES SHE LETS ME PLAY GOLF."

We all laughed. I noticed several cowboy hats dangling from a hat rack next to the front door. Bob handed me one. He grabbed another, and we each put one on. Pat took my picture as I stood next to him. I had to admit it. I had removed my investigator's mask and had become Bob Heironimus's friend. Then Bob clasped my hand tightly and wished Pat and me safe journey.

Back in Mill Creek, I reviewed everything I had written. I formulated the conclusion to the Roger Patterson story, and stepping outside one early evening, I found Pat sitting on the swing on the front deck of our house. She was looking at the sun going down. Through the trees that lined the front of our property, I could see soft, reddish-pink clouds hanging in the western sky. Rain was falling nearly every day now. Summer was slipping into the past. I sat down beside her.

I took her hand and we swung gently back and forth. "Honey, unless new information arises, I consider the book completed."

She squeezed my fingers.

"Here's my conclusion to the Roger Patterson story." I cleared my throat. "It all boils down to two major issues—Roger Patterson's character and the veracity of the film."

I rocked the swing a little harder.

"First, Patterson," I said. "We know the following. He came from a 'hard scrabble' family, as his brother Les said, and he never shirked off his chronic poverty. He was poor even as an adult. In fact, as DeAtley said, he ended up on welfare and was always asking DeAtley for handouts. We also know that Roger lost his father at a young age. Without a father and as the youngest and shortest of the Patterson brothers, he distinguished himself through body building and sports and showing off. He was a loner. Temperamental. Controlling. Even violent. Maybe he could have made money off his athletic abilities, and he did try rodeo for awhile. But it turns out his creative and artistic skills took center stage and became the means to his survival. He had begun drawing people and animals, especially horses, as a young boy. He was observant, he had an eye for detail and a sharp technical mind."

"He was good at leather crafts."

"Yes. And woodworking and carving, and he was into gadgets, inventions, contraptions, like the Prop Lock to hold up tree branches and that special canteen and the hoop and stick. Remember Les Patterson's statement, 'He just loved inventions. They were number one'?"

"Yes."

The swing creaked as it swayed.

"Witness after witness have called Roger Patterson a 'genius,'" I said. "Jerry Merritt said, 'Roger Patterson was one of the most talented people I ever run into my entire life. He could do anything.'"

"Yes," Pat said.

"Merritt also said that Patterson 'built things all the time, used to build everything.' We know all about Patterson's wagons and the carts and the stagecoach, and we know he had the ability to construct them. Patterson could see with his own eyes how things fitted together and how parts, even the smallest ones, were related. I don't know if you remember, but Glenn Patterson said Roger took apart a Triumph racing bike and put it back together."

"I remember that."

"In short, Roger Patterson did have the skill to conceive, design, create, assemble, and make a Bigfoot suit. There is no doubt about that. We proved it."

She pressed her shoulder against me.

"Now, Patterson was also a crook," I said. "We've proved that, too." I counted off on my fingers. "First, he was arrested for grand larceny. Second, he didn't pay his bills. See the court files. Plus, Vilma Radford told us he owed numerous creditors. Third, he stuck his friends with phone bills. That includes Jerry Merritt, his boyhood friend, among others. Fourth, he engaged in mail fraud. Fifth, he ripped off Glen Koelling. Sixth, he ripped off Bob Swanson. Seventh, he ripped off Radford. Eighth, he was an adulterer, according to DeAtley. And, also according to DeAtley, Roger ripped off his own mother and apparently engaged in insurance fraud."

"I don't remember that," Pat said.

"Don't you remember? DeAtley said he found Patterson's car in the bottom of a quarry, years after Patterson's car had been supposedly stolen."

"Oh, that's right."

"In total, I think we've proved overwhelmingly that Roger Patterson was, as Al DeAtley calls him, a 'cheat, a liar, and a thief.' The independent memories of those I've interviewed, and the public record, prove it."

A dog started barking down the street, and another at the opposite end of the street began yapping in response.

I said, "And finally, we can't forget Harvey Anderson, who told us that Patterson came to him expressly to buy a camera to shoot a Bigfoot film and that he had ordered a gorilla costume from Los Angeles."

"And," Pat added, "he told Harvey that he was dying of cancer and he needed to generate money for his family. Also, he was shooting a movie about the hunt for Bigfoot near his home at least six months before he filmed the Bigfoot at Bluff Creek."

"Exactly," I said. "And let's not forget that Merritt and Patterson went down to Hollywood *before* October 20, 1967, to drum up investors to complete the film, right after Patterson ripped off Radford."

The black ink of night began seeping across the curvature of the sky, and the band of reddish light brushing the treetops began to fade.

I shivered in the cooling air. "In my book, when it comes to the truthfulness of a fantastic story that borders on the unbelievable but could possibly be true—all things being equal, the character of the witness or claimant, his honesty, his truthfulness, his background, his behavior, his actions—are *absolutely paramount*. Roger Patterson's character fails the smell test. Sum up all the information about Roger Patterson, and it comes down to two simple points. One, he had the ability to conceive of and create a Bigfoot suit, and two, he was a crook. "

A neighbor's dog streaked through the front yard and down the gravel driveway. "Cocoa!" Pat shouted, but the dog kept running.

"Now, the film," I said. "It fails the test, too. I'm not going to go through all the suspicious features of the walking hairy man in Patterson's film. I've stared at the folds and the sagging areas in the Bigfoot's butt long enough. I've stared at the feet and the way they look like the feet on a pajama suit. The hands look like black gloves and so on and so forth. The film is a fake because the creature in that film looks like a man in a costume and walks like a man with a few dubious 'apelike' biomechanical features—like the way it swivels its head or slouches its shoulders or bends its knees or swings its arms or walks on its heels. These are all features a human being can emulate. Krantz and Dahinden even demonstrate on videos how a person can walk like the Bigfoot in the film. Bob Heironimus walks like the Bigfoot, and he's confessed to wearing the suit, and he's provided a good technical description of the components of the suit and how the costume was designed to fit him. Plus, Bob was big enough and strong enough and healthy enough in 1967 to portray the Bigfoot. He also confessed to his friends that he wore the suit not long after he wore it, and they've vouched for his integrity and they remember his confession. Plus, his mother saw the suit, so did his nephew. But more than that, it's his story of the prosthetic eye molded into the right eyehole that eliminates any lingering doubts. It's a story that I don't even think a liar could dream up."

"And of course, the mystery of how the film was handled," Pat said.

"Exactly. It's totally inexcusable that the Bigfoot hunters don't know *when* and *where* the film was processed, especially given the incredibly short forty-eight-hour time frame to get the film processed and shown in DeAtley's house. Then throw in the discrepancies in Patterson's and Gimlin's stories—about whether the horses reared or bucked or fell, and whether the creature was six feet tall or seven and a half feet tall, and the fact that Gimlin doesn't remember from where Patterson exactly mailed the film to DeAtley even though Gimlin was with Patterson on October 20."

"And that it poured on the morning of October 21, but the Bigfoot's tracks survived the storm," added Pat.

Pat buttoned up her sweater against the cold.

"It goes on and on, all the flaws in the story," I said, "the missing data points, the suspicious behavior of the players, the inconsistencies."

A thin sliver of red remained unmovable above the tree line.

"Patterson wanted to strike it rich," I said. "Bigfoot was the means. Bigfoot was his ticket out of poverty. Bigfoot on the big screen. Bigfoot was the American Dream."

"I'm getting cold." Pat hugged her arms.

I snuggled up against her. "The Bigfoot hunters blew it," I said. "They had their chance in 1967, and they bought Patterson and the film, hook, line, and sinker. Why? Because they wanted to *believe*. And it was easy because they didn't do their job. They didn't want to consider Patterson's character in the equation. What did Green tell me? 'Let me suggest that it doesn't matter if that film was taken by a criminal.' And Lund: 'You could be Adolf Hitler and film a Bigfoot.' And Byrne: 'I wasn't so much interested in the wrongdoing as much as I was interested in the numbers on the camera and the lens.' Even Dahinden knew

Patterson was a crook. He knew Patterson was dishonest. He told me so. They wanted to believe for their own reasons, their own motives. And they convinced the media to believe it, too, or at least the media took the easy way out. Unfortunately, we've had to be the ones to go back and do the work they should have done. Now I've got to stand up and tell the public the truth."

With my heels, I brought the swing to a halt. I took Pat's hand. "Patterson and the film are joined at the chest," I said, "like twins. Destroy one of them, and the other dies. We proved the film a fake. The legend is dead. Soon I'll be the most hated man in America."

"Well, *I* love you," Pat said. We stood up and we put our arms around each other and watched the violet sky swallow the remaining thread of red lipping the jagged tops of the evergreens, cedar, and cottonwood trees.

I loved the Pacific Northwest, and I had solved one of its great mysteries. The last vestige of Roger Patterson's quick-buck scheme, the glittering, golden light of his flickering film, the flimsy veil of his false mystery broke into thin mist, floated into the trees, and vanished. I had captured part of American history. And now, that distant past was put to rest.

Pat and I looked fondly at the first diamond-bright stars sparkling in the cold, night sky. We kissed and stepped inside the house.

NOTES

1. Bobbie Short, "John Green's Interview with Bob Gimlin 1992" (transcript) [online], http://www.n2.net/prey/bigfoot/interviews/john.htm [February 1999].

2. John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Vancouver, BC: Hancock House Publishers, Ltd., 1978), p. 73.

3. Ibid., p. 78.

4. "Mrs. Bigfoot Is Filmed!" Humbolt *Times Standard*, October 21, 1967, p. 1.

5. Green, *Sasquatch*, p. 78.

6. *Polk's Yakima City Directory* (Los Angeles: R. L. Polk & Company Publishers).

23

REQUIEM TO BLUFF CREEK

And so the Bigfoot film legend is completely dead.
—Greg Long

In August 2003, Pat and I decided to combine a long-awaited, two-week vacation with some additional investigation into Bob Heironimus's story, with an eye toward further substantiating his statements for diehard skeptics. Several times Bob had described for me the places where he had gone in the Bluff Creek area, what he had done at each of them, and the estimated distances that separated each place. Our main vacation destination was Los Angeles, where we planned to visit one of my sons at the University of Southern California, but a side trip to Bluff Creek would provide us with an opportunity to find the places Bob had described, study them, map them, and measure the distances. We'd compare our data to the facts Bob remembered; if the two sets of data closely matched, Bob's story would be further validated.

On August 1, we drove out of Mill Creek, Washington, and headed south on Interstate 5 (I-5). After a brief stop in the lush Willamette Valley in Oregon to visit Pat's parents in Albany, we continued the next day into the mountains of southern Oregon, reached the Siskiyou Summit (4,310 feet), and raced down the other side into Yreka in Northern California. Ten miles before reaching Yreka, we noted the turnoff to Highway 96, the highway Bob traveled on to meet up with Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin near Bluff Creek. But, before following his trail on the highway, we needed to find a piece of important information in the Siskiyou County Library in Yreka.

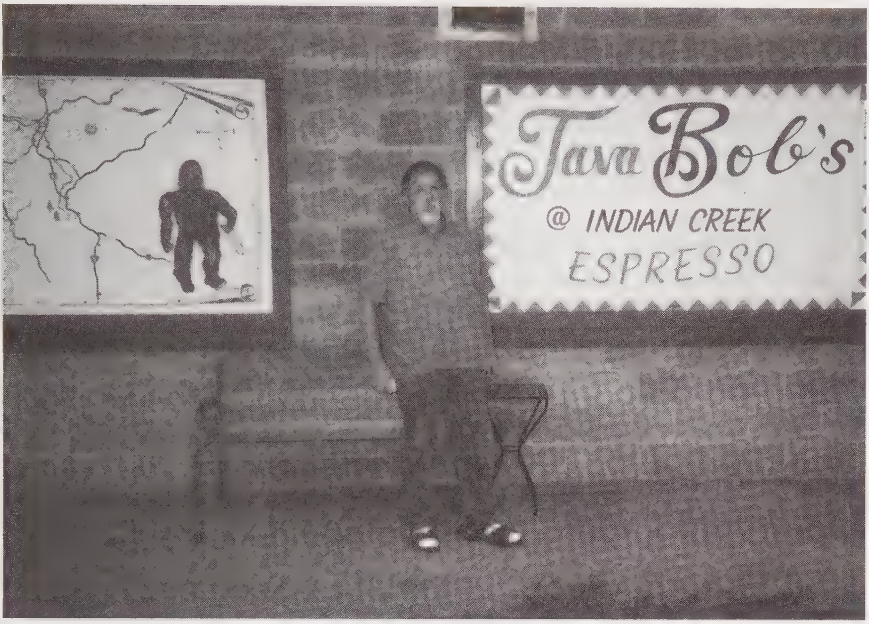
The next morning, we were scrolling through a roll of microfilm containing the *Siskiyou Daily News* when we came across what we wanted—a news story confirming that Happy Camp, sixty-one miles west of Yreka on Highway 96, had celebrated its second annual Bigfoot Jamboree on Labor Day weekend, 1967.[1] The jamboree featured games, refreshments, music, and the appearance in a parade of a man in a Bigfoot suit. Several times Bob told me he remembered

A huge Bigfoot-in-progress sculpture at Happy Camp, California, August 2003. Photo by Greg Long.

seeing a banner stretched across Highway 96 when he drove through Happy Camp. The news story was definitive proof that an advertised Labor Day weekend activity did occur in 1967. Because Bob had seen a banner just before entering Happy Camp, it appeared that Bob saw a Bigfoot Jamboree banner either before, during, or after the Labor Day weekend festivities. This fact added more support to the theory that the hoax film was shot in late August or early September 1967, not on October 20. Pat and I now needed eyewitnesses who could verify that an actual banner was, indeed, stretched across Highway 96 near the time of the Jamboree.

We left the library, jumped into our car, and backtracked ten miles on I-5 to the Highway 96 turnoff. Soon we were traveling deep into the Klamath National Forest. On our left, high mountains, jagged peaks, and steep hillsides loomed above the sinuous course of the bluish-green Klamath River that flowed south to the Pacific. On our right were more mountains and hills. Dense forests of cedar, Douglas fir, oak, ponderosa pine, and redwoods smothered the slopes. The cloak of green vegetation and trees covering the imposing terrain on both sides of the river and highway was so dense, so extensive, Pat and I felt we were the only ones in the forest. I could see few signs of human habitation. At certain locations, the placid surface of the gently flowing river below us shattered into white water against huge boulders. Tiny, yellow rubber rafts bearing specks of human cargo slowly drifted downriver to dare the rapids. Otherwise, beyond the few farm houses and a handful of vehicles flashing by us, Pat and I felt totally alone and isolated. Yes, it was possible, I thought, for a Bigfoot to hide here. But to film one?

Entering the city limits of Happy Camp, a twenty-foot-tall, steel sculpture of



Bob Schmalzbach ("Java Bob"), owner of Java Bob's Espresso restaurant in Happy Camp, California. Photo by Greg Long.

a Bigfoot under construction next to the highway glowered down at us. We pulled into the gravel parking lot of the U.S. Forest Service Happy Camp Ranger District Office at the other end of town and managed an interview with Gaye Baxter, a Forest Service employee. The Bigfoot sculpture was a community project, Baxter explained, supported by donations, sweat equity, and the help of a Yreka artist. Several years before, Baxter herself had written and submitted a proposal to the Forest Service regional office to name the ninety-mile stretch of Highway 96 from Happy Camp to Willow Creek the "Bigfoot Scenic Highway." Today, maps bear that name. Baxter's effort was one of many emerging from the local populace, she said, to help revitalize towns suffering economically from the effects of environmental regulations and controversies over the spotted owl. "We've lost most of our timber mills," Baxter said. "But with Bigfoot, *we've struck gold!*"

We learned from Baxter that locals regularly gathered to swap news at Java Bob's restaurant on Indian Creek Road in Happy Camp. Perhaps we might find Bigfoot stories there, she suggested. Unfortunately, the restaurant was closed on Mondays, so we planned to return to Happy Camp the next day.

We drove farther south. Forty-five minutes later, we suddenly came upon a bridge spanning Bluff Creek. As we crossed the bridge, we heard, for the first

Terri Moehring, a waitress at Java Bob's restaurant, remembered seeing a Bigfoot Jamboree banner in 1967 near the entrance to Happy Camp. Photo by Pat Long.

time, the muffled roar of fast-moving waters; through the gaps in the bridge railing zipping by us, we snatched brief glimpses of the creek. Memories of Patterson's hoax stirred in us, but we couldn't stop—we had a reservation at the Bigfoot Motel in Willow Creek. An hour later, having checked into the motel, we were toting our luggage into our room when we noticed childish crayon drawings of Bigfoot prints scrawled on the concrete walkway outside our door. A favorable omen?

Early next morning, Tuesday, August 5, we grabbed two Subway sandwiches, ice for our cooler, a tall cup of hot coffee for me, and raced back to Happy Camp. We reached Java Bob's, unmistakable because of the amateur painting of a smiling, brown Bigfoot gracing an outside wall. There we introduced ourselves to the portly, genial owner, Bob Schmalzbach. It didn't take long for him to find witnesses to the Bigfoot Jamboree banner. One was Terri Moehring, a forty-eight-year-old waitress at the restaurant who had lived all but one year in Happy Camp. She took a break from serving customers and joined Java Bob, Pat and me, and a couple of weather-beaten locals under a covered patio out front.

"The banner was hanging up there where Scott Valley Bank is today," Moehring said, turquoise-studded bracelets jangling as she pointed to the eastern entrance to the town. "The banner said 'Bigfoot Jamboree and Parade' and gave the dates of the jamboree." The banner, she remembered, hung above Highway 96, strung between two poles. After thanking Moehring, Pat and I followed Java Bob inside the restaurant where he introduced me to Lois Byas, seventy-five years old. Byas told me that because she owned a restaurant in 1967 on the north side of the highway not far from the eastern entrance to Happy Camp, the banner was clearly in her view.

We had the eyewitness accounts we needed, and after photographing Bob Schmalzbach, we thanked everybody and headed south on Highway 96. As we crossed the Bluff Creek bridge, we slowed just south of the bridge and turned right off the highway into a shaded area where we ate our sandwiches while fighting off huge bumble bees. Then, we explored the immediate area on foot. We knew that in 1964 a powerful flood had wiped out the old bridge and reshaped parts of Bluff Creek. The existing bridge was built in 1966, according to an inscription on the bridge.

I edged to the center of a narrow concrete walkway and looked down onto the roaring waters seventy-five feet below. Although the creek wasn't wide or deep, angry water was crashing against boulders and downed trees scattered at various locations in the creek. Snaking along the northeast stream bank was an old road bombarded with fallen rocks and trees; traveling the road on horseback would nigh be impossible. The creek was flowing between the steep, white walls of a stark, harsh canyon, massive landslides evident at several points along the walls. I could see trees up-canyon growing haphazardly among rocks, wild brush, sandbars, and fallen timber.

It was an impressive, foreboding site, this Bluff Creek flowing down to the Klamath River. I pictured Patterson and Gimlin moving slowly on horseback far upstream around tortuous bends to a point where they couldn't be seen from the highway. However, I knew from reading Peter Byrne's account of the Bigfoot filming[2] that in 1967 a logging road ran above the west embankment of Bluff Creek; Patterson and Gimlin could have been easily spotted below. I've always been convinced that the film site was chosen more for a marginal "wilderness" area that was easy to get in and out of than a *true* wilderness where Bigfoot hunts should take place on foot in extremely deep forests far removed from civilization and convenient logging roads. The proximity of a logging road to Patterson's film site was only one bit of information from Heironimus that convinced me he was telling the truth. And just where was that convenient logging road?

After I left the bridge and rejoined Pat, we began to search for the road. We started off on foot along the top of the west cliff above the creek. Luckily, an old wood fence prevented us from getting too close to the cliff edge; nevertheless, we found signs of old asphalt and gravel near the fence. We also noticed signs of an old, graying asphalt road abutting the southwest side of Highway 96 mere yards south of the bridge. Heading northerly, the asphalt road disappeared into brush just west of where we had eaten lunch. Next to the old road, near the highway, stood two weathered poles, which could have once supported a road sign. Not far from these poles was a new green and white sign with the words "Bluff Creek Road—Fish Lake." A thought clicked in my mind. Heironimus had told me in interviews that in 1967 he followed Patterson and Gimlin in his mother's car up "Bluff Creek Road." I had always wondered how he knew the name of the road. The two old poles indicated that Heironimus had simply read the name "Bluff Creek Road" on the missing sign once affixed to the poles, and he had remembered the name!

The new sign pointed us toward the new Bluff Creek Road, and Pat and I took the time to drive it. The road ran northwesterly back up into thickly packed trees and heavy brush growing not far west of the original road. As I carefully took the curves, scattered pieces of a memory snapped into place. Heironimus had said that he remembered Bluff Creek Road *climbing* as he followed Patterson and Gimlin in their truck. Our car was *climbing*; here was more proof that Bob's memory was reasonably accurate.

We had two more points to prove, however. So, after reaching Fish Lake, where we soaked up the beauty of the blue surface partially covered with huge lily pads and the soothing sounds of wind in the trees, we turned around and drove back down to Highway 96. The first point of the remaining points to prove: Where was the store and gas station where Heironimus had met up with Patterson and Gimlin?

We left Bluff Creek and drove seven miles south on Highway 96 to the tiny town of Weitchpec whose single main feature seemed to be the Yurok Indian Tribal Headquarters building. On the way to Weitchpec, we saw no evidence of gas stations on either side of the highway. However, just yards after we crossed over a bridge above the Klamath River in Weitchpec, we saw on our right-hand side a general store with gas pumps. A sign proclaimed that the Pearson's Family Owned Store had been in this location since 1951. *Bingo!* Could the owners be the same ones running the store in 1967 and have remembered Patterson and Gimlin, or Heironimus's car?

The screen door squeaked as we eagerly stepped inside. Bill Pearson, the owner, confirmed that he had run the establishment since 1951; however, while he was aware of the Patterson Bigfoot film, he couldn't recall ever meeting the men. My excitement plummeted. By then I had remembered that Pearson's store was on the right-hand side of Highway 96 and that Heironimus had told me more than once that the store was on the *left-hand* side of the highway as he headed south. But hope returned when Pearson told me that there had been a gas station "down the road a-ways." He waved languidly toward the direction Pat and I had just come.

Confused, we drove back over the Klamath River bridge. Pat volunteered to write down on a pad of paper the mileage marking the landmarks I described along the way. Five and six-tenths miles from Pearson's store, I spotted an abandoned wood structure on our right-hand side set back far enough from the highway to escape my notice earlier. A sign fixed above the store announced, "THE BLUFF CREEK COMPANY." The door itself and the windows were boarded up; no gas pumps were in sight. I wheeled off the highway and slid to a stop on loose gravel in front of the store.

A man in his early forties was working in front of a bright, red house that stood within several feet of the store, hauling a load of dry cement and a shovel in a wheelbarrow. While Pat sat in the car, I approached him. After I explained my book project, he identified himself as Bill Smith Jr., the manager of the Bluff

THE BLUFF CREEK COMPANY

The Bluff Creek Company store where most likely Roger Patterson, Bob Gimlin, and Bob Heironimus rendezvoused before driving to Bluff Creek. Photo by Greg Long.

Creek Resort, an RV encampment located two-tenths of a mile just south of his house. Smith readily answered my questions about the abandoned store's past. His grandparents had bought the store from a man named Roy in the early 1960s. Smith's father inherited the store and ran it from 1980 to 1991, when he closed it down.

"Did the store have gas pumps in 1967?" I asked.

"As far back as I can remember, there were gas pumps here," Smith said, even remembering that the brand of gasoline had been Union 76. "We also sold camping, fishing supplies, anything you can think of, including liquor."

Smith felt strongly that The Bluff Creek Company store was probably where Patterson and Gimlin bought their food and gas. He remembered two other stores further north on Highway 96. One of them, the Greasy Spoon, had been located right next to Aikens Creek, but a flood had wiped it out in 1964. The Greasy Spoon sold only food and mining supplies, said Smith. The second store had been further north of the Greasy Spoon; unfortunately, the '64 flood also wiped out this store owned by the Gepharts; only its concrete foundation was left—hanging half off a precipice above Bluff Creek.

I thanked Bill Smith, and Pat and I headed off again. Following his directions, we drove one and seven-tenths miles north on Highway 96, slowed, and turned to the right off the highway into the entrance of the Aikens Creek Recreation Campground. We parked near a small, white trailer squatting on tiny wheels and sporting a satellite dish, the home of the camp host, Dave Stone.

Warily, he stepped out to greet us. Once he understood the purpose for my visit, he quickly warmed up. Yes, he remembered a small store not far from his trailer; in fact, it was near the entrance we had just driven down. "But it was wiped out by the flood of '64," he said. "Bluff Creek used to hook up with Aikens Creek here before the flood, but now its over that-a-way [to the southeast]."

Interesting, I thought. That left the other store Smith had mentioned. Stone described its location just as Smith had: it had been located on the *left* side of Highway 96, as Heironimus drove south, and was just north of the E-Ne-Nuck Campground, another RV site. Unfortunately, the store wasn't close to the highway; instead, customers had to drive up a sloping hill to a flat area where it once stood. If I was interested in finding the remnants of it, Stone said, I'd have to hike up an animal trail back into brush.

This prospect did not sound appealing, but Pat and I did find the road, rutted and peppered with rocks, and inched up it seventy-five yards. We passed a pile of fresh bear scat in the middle of the road as we pulled the car onto a flat space under a grove of trees. We stepped out and soon picked up the sound of a woodpecker; underfoot was nothing but leaves and needles.

"I don't see how this store would even have gas pumps," I told Pat. "Even if the store survived the '64 flood, which it didn't, I doubt a fuel truck could even make it up here, let alone turn around. Seems out of the question." We eased back down the road and onto the highway.

We had one last item to investigate. Bob said that after he left the store and gas station—likely The Bluff Creek Company store—he drove up Highway 96 where he pulled off at a turnout to wait for Patterson and Gimlin to join him in their truck. After leaving the turnout, the two vehicles traveled further north until they reached the Bluff Creek Road. From that point, they drove off the highway to hide the Buick and then further on in Gimlin's truck to the campsite. Pat and I wanted to find the turnout.

Reconstructing Bob's steps, we drove back to The Bluff Creek Company store, turned around, and drove north to look for the turnout. It didn't take long for Pat and I to find several small turnouts on the right-hand side of the highway; however, the turnouts were too small to accommodate the truck and the Buick. But soon we found two suitable ones—one was right before Aikens Creek, while the other was fifty yards north of E-Ne-Nuck Campground. Both were on the right-hand side of the road where one would expect the two vehicles to turn off.

We pulled off the highway onto the second turnout. After we ate a snack in the car, I checked the distances Pat had marked on her pad. "Amazing!" I said. "The distance from The Bluff Creek Company store to the Bluff Creek Road is a tenth of a mile short of three miles. Bob told me he followed Patterson and Gimlin to a turnout that was about two to *three miles* from the store. Bob's memory is quite accurate!"

Pat nodded with a smile.

"The store was on the *left-hand side* just as he said," I continued. "He also

Eureka, California, post office where Bob Heironimus mailed a package containing the Roger Patterson Bigfoot film to Al DeAltey in Yakima, Washington. Photo by Greg Long.

said he drove *north* up the Bluff Creek Road—or northwesterly. That's the right direction. He said the road went uphill. That's true. You can see the incline of the terrain by just looking at the elevation of the creek. Plus, we drove it—uphill. Bob said he hid his mother's car on the left-hand side of Bluff Creek Road. That would be correct because on the right-hand side is nothing but a sheer drop-off. He said Patterson and Gimlin camped further up the road and also on the left-hand side. Correct again. On the right is the drop-off."

I handed the pad back to Pat. "The only fact he got wrong was the direction he said he drove out of town," I said. "He said he drove west, when actually he drove north. He got that mixed up because he confused Willow Creek with Weitchpec."

I turned on the ignition. The only place Pat and I had not traveled to was the Bluff Creek film site. But I had read in several e-mails posted on a Bigfoot list that no one seemed to know where the film site actually was anymore as a result of the changed topography, new vegetation, and the absence of the old logging road. Bob had mentioned driving anywhere from a mile to five miles north on Bluff Creek Road to shoot the film. Pat and I didn't have the time nor a four-wheel-drive vehicle to attempt to find the film site. The facts we had uncovered on this trip and the *totality* of Bob's story as he had told it to me, from the first time he met Gimlin and Patterson in Yakima to his driving back to Yakima and the events that followed, were what counted.

We left the turnout, and we drove south to Willow Creek, then west to Eureka, where we took a photo of the Eureka post office where Bob had mailed the film. Then we were off to see my son in L.A.

Finally, there is another clarifying bit of information important to this book. On November 26, 2002, Ray Wallace, eighty-four years old, died in a Centralia, Washington, nursing home. Wallace owned Wallace Construction Company, and in the summer of 1958 it was his company that was building the new logging road near Bluff Creek. Jerry Crew, discussed earlier in this book, worked for Wallace as a bulldozer operator. It was Crew who found huge Bigfoot prints around Wallace's construction equipment. And it was the Humboldt *Times Standard* in Eureka that ran a front-page story on the prints and coined the term "Bigfoot."

When Ray Wallace died, the Wallace family was quick to announce that Ray had admitted to family members that he had carved wood Bigfoot feet, and then as a prank he and his brother Wilbur had slipped them on and created the footprints around the construction equipment. Wallace also created fake Bigfoot films. Michael Wallace, Ray's son, knew about his father's hoax, but he never let the secret out. "The family just sat back and grinned," he said.[3]

And so the Bigfoot film legend, which enjoyed a long and lively run, is now completely dead.

NOTES

1. "Bigfoot Parade, Jubilee Awards Are Presented," *Siskiyou Daily News*, 90, no. 226 (September 6, 1967): 1.

2. Peter Byrne, *The Search for Bigfoot: Monster, Myth or Man?* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), pp. 130–34.

3. Bob Young, "Lovable Trickster Created a Monster with Bigfoot Hoax," *Seattle Times* [online], Seattletimes.com [December 5, 2002].

24

BREAKTHROUGH: PHILIP MORRIS

When I saw the film on television, I knew within seconds that I was looking at my suit. I knew it! That suit was the style of my gorilla suit.

—Philip Morris, costume maker and magician

Philip Morris, famous magician, and owner of Morris Costumes, the largest wholesaler of costumes in the Untied States. Courtesy of Philip Morris.

The legend of Roger Patterson's film was, indeed, dead. As it turned out, I was the one to place the headstone on the film's grave. It was now time to walk away, almost. . . .

In November 2003, right before the publishing of this book, I realized that I had, unfortunately, overlooked a promising lead. Philip Morris (no relation to the cigarette manufacturer), owner of Morris Costumes in Charlotte, North Carolina, had stated on the radio station WBT-AM in Charlotte on August 16, 2002, that he had sold a gorilla suit to Roger Patterson—*and that the suit ended up in Patterson's Bigfoot film!* Perhaps this was another major breakthrough in the case, one that would finally silence the "critics" who believed claims based only on their blind faith or any number of other excuses, which doubtless they'll continue to muster, contrive, and conjure up even after this book exposes Patterson's skullduggery and finally lays the case to rest. For some of these Bigfoot "believers," the fact that science has never found a Bigfoot is "hard evidence" that such creatures must exist! Incredible!

On November 26, 2003, I eagerly picked up the phone and surprised Morris at his office. Morris was friendly and talkative; the light step in his voice was punctuated with occasional staccato bouts of laughter. He was sixty-seven years old, born on January 8, 1935. Growing up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, he became fascinated as a youngster with magic and performed small magic shows in his neighborhood. An encounter with the famous magician Harry Blackstone Sr. on a stage in front of a live audience in Kalamazoo, and a visit to Blackstone's house, thrilled Morris, and he instantly became hooked on show business. After high school, Morris toured the country with Lash LaRue's Western Show. LaRue was a famous cowboy movie star who always dressed in black and carried a whip. Morris had his own ghost and horror show that he took with him on the tour. Morris's show featured gruesome illusions, such as dismembering pretty girls. At eighteen, Morris married Amy Strong, his high school sweetheart. The last stop on LaRue's tour was a show in Charlotte, North Carolina. Philip and Amy planned to travel on with LaRue to California, but they ended up staying in Charlotte to take on a local theatrical engagement. They never left Charlotte. Eventually, the young couple had two daughters, Terri and Sandra, and one son, Scott.

Philip Morris informed me that Morris Costumes grew from a basement operation that he and Amy started in their Charlotte house in 1955. Today, Morris Costumes is the *largest* wholesale supplier of costumes in the United States! In 2003, his company was selling costumes to ten thousand retail stores in the country, major national distributors, television studios, and motion picture companies. He had a second office in Downey, California, to serve the area around Hollywood. In 1960 Morris started *Dr. Evil's Horror Theater*, a popular television show in the South that televised old horror films and was hosted by Morris himself as Dr. Evil. The show ran until 1969. He was also the coauthor of a popular, self-published book entitled *How to Operate a Financially Successful Haunted House* (1985), which sold more than fifteen thousand copies. Every October, many of his costumes and props are displayed in his showroom and in a tent outside his Charlotte facility for public viewing. Visitors from as far as South America, Europe, and Asia travel to Charlotte to meet Morris and see his costumes in the showroom and the million-dollar haunted house that he built and attached to the showroom. His company currently sells a wide range of costumes and related products, such as makeup and props, as well as twenty different gorilla suits and some space alien costumes. "I have a high visibility in the industry," he said. Impressive business credentials, I thought.

After overcoming his initial surprise that I was about to publish a book that finally told the truth about Patterson's film, Morris quickly jumped into his account of his experience with Roger Patterson.

your Ghost Host,
Dr. Evil

Philip Morris created his persona "Dr. Evil" in 1959. When *Dr. Evil's Horror Theater* aired on WBT-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1960, Morris was manufacturing and selling gorilla costumes from the basement of his house. Courtesy of Philip Morris.

His story began with the first gorilla suit he designed and built. In the late 1950s, carnivals were interested in buying gorilla suits that could be used in a highly popular sideshow called the "Girl to Gorilla illusion." In the gag, a pretty girl walks behind a door and emerges transformed into a gorilla, then rushes into the audience. It was all in fun, but the act was so realistic the audience would flee in terror out of the tent. The Girl to Gorilla illusion had been imported into America by a German carnival owner in the 1930s, but in the 1950s no realistic gorilla suits were commercially available in the United States to revive the act. In the 1950s, an actor who played a gorilla in a movie would "rent" himself out in his own gorilla costume that the actor himself designed and built. Commercially, however, there were very few gorilla suits on the market. The only gorilla suits available of any quality were in France or Germany, and they cost $2,000 to $3,000. Morris fulfilled the market demand for an affordable, durable gorilla suit that could be used in the revival of the Girl to Gorilla illusion act. Soon, Morris had established a growing, profitable niche market.

Morris was still making gorilla suits in 1967 when, around August, he got a call from a man who identified himself as Roger Patterson.

Morris told me, "Patterson asked me if I had a realistic-looking gorilla suit. I immediately asked him if he was a carny [carnival owner] because I thought he wanted to use it in the Girl to Gorilla illusion. He said, 'No, I'm a rodeo cowboy. We're just going to have some fun.'"

"Uh-huh," I commented, my ear glued to Morris's every word.

The fact that Patterson was a rodeo cowboy was unknown by most people. At most, he was described as a cowboy, or in many of the news clippings, just as "Roger Patterson," a seemingly naïve, well-intentioned Bigfoot hunter who happened to get lucky. So far, Morris's story was off to a solid start along the road of truthfulness.

Morris continued, "Patterson said, 'I want to make sure the suit looks like a real gorilla. You send me the suit, and if I like it, I'll send you money, and if I don't like it, I'll send the suit back to you.' I said, 'I have a better idea. You send the money *first*, then I'll send you the suit. And if you don't like it, send it back, and I'll send your money back.'" Morris laughed. "Yeah, right! I was going to send him a suit without the money first!"

I laughed with him. "That sounds like Roger." I also knew that Patterson had the money to buy the suit—the seven hundred dollars he conned from Vilma Radford.

"I remember," Morris said, "I was selling those suits back then for $335. Later, I raised their price to $435. I have a gorilla suit today I sell for $5,000!"

"Wow," I said. "So, Patterson sent you a check?"

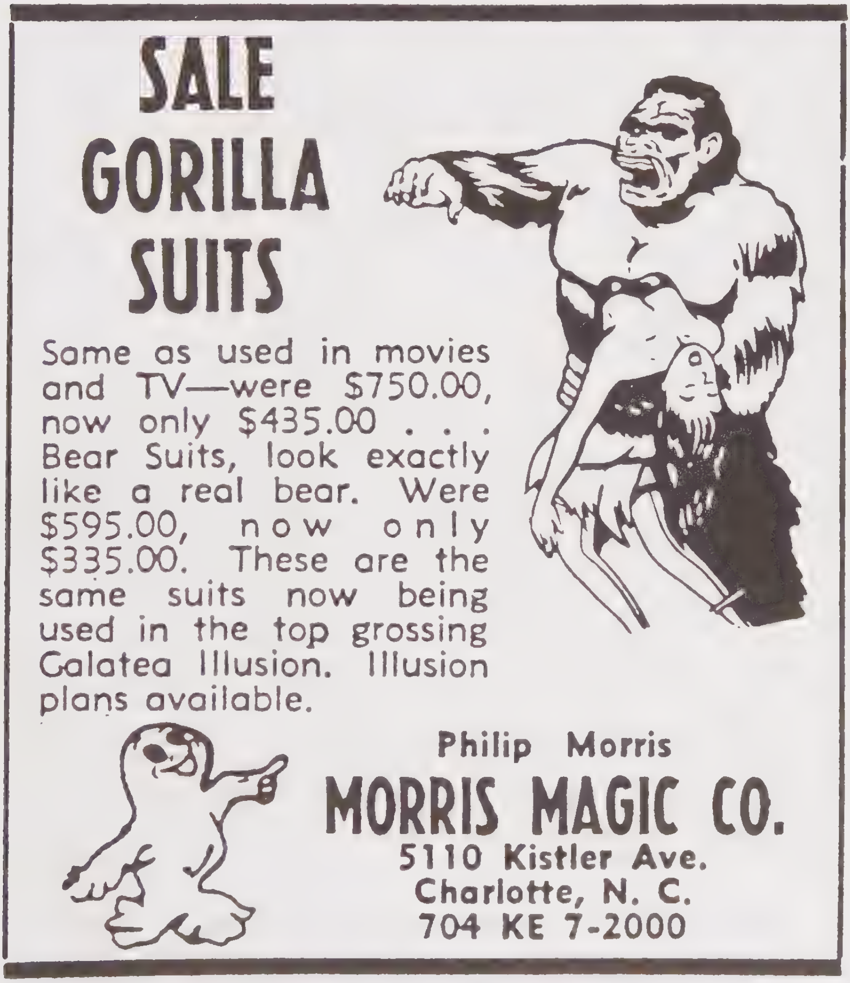
"No, a postal money order. He also sent money for the shipping. So I took one of my gorilla suits and we shipped it to him. Parcel post, if I remember. It was a standard suit we sold to all our customers. Then, not long after he would have received the suit, I got a call from him."

DECEMBER 2, 1967 • SIXTY CENTS
AMUSEMENT BUSINESS
PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BILLBOARD PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Coming Events
DECEMBER, 1967—MAY 1968

Cover of *Amusement Business* magazine, December 1967. The magazine carried, among its stories, articles on rodeo personalities and rodeo shows. Roger Patterson probably read Morris's gorilla suit ad in the August 1967 issue. Courtesy of Philip Morris.

"Yes?" I sensed that some very interesting information was about to be revealed.

"He said he had received the suit, and that it seemed okay, but, he said, 'I can see the zipper in the back.' I told him, 'Just brush the fur down over the zipper.' The fur on the suit was a material called dynel. It was a nylon fiber, a popular material back then. It was used on lots of things, like plush toys, bathroom rugs, toilet seats. I bought it from my supplier in only two colors, black and brown. Then Roger wanted to know how to make the arms longer. I said, 'Find



SALE

GORILLA SUITS

Same as used in movies and TV—were $750.00, now only $435.00 . . . Bear Suits, look exactly like a real bear. Were $595.00, now only $335.00. These are the same suits now being used in the top grossing Galatea Illusion. Illusion plans available.

Philip Morris

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5110 Kistler Ave.
Charlotte, N. C.
704 KE 7-2000

Copy of the actual display ad in the December 2, 1967, issue of *Amusement Business* magazine advertising for sale Philip Morris's gorilla suits. Courtesy of Philip Morris.

a shovel handle or a stick and slip it in the sleeves. Then attach the gloves to the stick.' That's how to extend the arms in a costume. You screw the gloves onto the stick. Then he said he wanted to make the shoulders more massive. I told him to go down to a local high school and get some old football pads—the coaches would probably be happy to get rid of some old, cracked ones—and put them in the shoulders."

Bam! I experienced a sudden rush of adrenaline. Bob Heironimus had told me that when he put on the suit he felt against his shoulders what seemed to be a *football player's pads*.

"He wanted to know how to fix the eyes," Morris went on. "He said, 'You can see the white of the skin, when he [his Bigfoot actor] looks through the eye holes.' I said, 'Well, take some black makeup and put it around the person's eyes, and also have him close his eyes and put the makeup on his eyelids. That should do it.'"

"Very interesting," I said. Of course, Heironimus's prosthetic eye glued onto the mask would have obscured the white skin around his right eye.

"Now another interesting thing is that while he was asking these questions, I could hear somebody else in the room with him, a male voice. The person would say things like, 'Ask him about the arms,' or, 'Ask him about this or that.' I definitely remember that."

"And you're sure it was Roger Patterson who first identified himself?"

"Absolutely!"

"I wonder how he found your phone number?"

"At that time we were running ads in *Amusement Business*, a weekly magazine published in Nashville, Tennessee. It was *the* bible of outdoor entertainment, mostly for amusement parks, carnivals, traveling shows like circuses, ice shows, even rodeo. Patterson was in rodeo. Maybe he read one of our ads in *Amusement Business*. It could have been lying around in some rodeo office. In fact, a year ago, I was going through my files and came across the ad."

Blood rushed to my head in a burst of excitement.

"And I was talking to Amy recently, and she remembered that when Roger called us the second time he asked us to ship him some extra gorilla fur. So we sent him some excess dynel that was lying around."

"Hmm." I sat up. What did Roger want to do with the extra material?

"I also have a photograph of the gorilla suit I can send to you."

My heart thumped. Steady, steady, I told myself. "Really?"

"It's from one of my Dr. Evil shows. It was the same design used for Roger's suit."

"I'd love to see those items," I said as my voice cracked slightly, barely containing my excitement.

"I can send them to you. Anyway, a couple of months later, October '67, I was watching TV, and this film is being shown, and I see my gorilla suit. 'That's my suit!' I yelled."

"Really? How did you know it was yours?"

"I was the only one who was making a gorilla suit like that at that time. I knew what my gorilla suit looked like. It was brown. In the fifties and sixties, I made my gorilla suits only in brown. The main reason why is the cabinet the Girl to Gorilla walks into has a black background. A brown gorilla contrasts better against black than a black gorilla against a black background."

"Well, I will tell you this," I said. "The man who wore the suit has confessed and—"

"He has?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. And to perform a test of your story, I'd like you to describe the suit you made in 1967."

"Sure."

For the next forty-five minutes, Morris described the suit in precise detail and how he made it. The suit had six separate pieces: a head, a body (arms, torso, and legs), two hands, and two feet. A knitted cloth material served as a backing to thousands of synthetic nylon strands called dynel, which were driven by a powerful knitting machine with needles through the knitted cloth material and then pulled back through to the other side of the cloth material. The strands, measuring from one inch to three inches or more, were grouped tightly together and looked and felt like plush fur. With the artificial fur sewn into the knitted cloth material, a person could cut pieces from yards of the stuff to make . . . *a gorilla suit*! That's what Morris thought when he first noticed the dynel on the knitted cloth in a fabric shop while on tour. Morris bought dynel in black or brown colors, which made sense; the colors of real gorillas were generally black or brown. He used brown dynel solely in the sixties—and was using brown dynel in 1967. In the 1970s, Morris made black gorilla suits. On a rare occasion, he made a white gorilla suit. That suit made its way from the Circus-Circus Casino in Las Vegas into the James Bond movie *Diamonds Are Forever*.

A thirty-six-inch zipper ran down the back of the body piece of Morris's gorilla suit, from the neckline to the crotch, so the wearer could get inside. Once zipped up, the wearer would put on, first, the feet, then the head, and finally the hands, which were simply gloves. The head, hands, and feet were formed from rubber latex and pieces of dynel fur were glued onto them. Morris made his own feet and gloves for his gorilla suits; later, in the 1970s, he bought feet from Don Post in California, the first inventor of the latex mask. The soles of the feet were flat pieces of neoprene cut to the size and shape of the feet and glued onto the latex.

To add bulk to the suit, Morris made a latex "chest." First, he sculpted a large piece of clay into the shape of a gorilla's chest with the requisite realistic muscles and nipples. The sculpture was placed inside a pasteboard box lined with plastic to protect the box from the effects of moisture. Then Morris poured wet plaster of Paris over the clay sculpture to form a mold. As plaster of Paris sets up, a chemical heat process ensues, and after two or three days, the moisture in the wet plaster evaporates. When the mold is completely dry and the clay sculpture removed, liquid latex can be brushed inside the negative mold. The mold absorbs the moisture of the latex. The normal honeydew-colored latex Morris used was tinted with black dye to simulate a gorilla's skin. Before the latex set, Morris took a cut-to-size, one-inch-thick piece of foam rubber and pressed it onto the wet latex inside the mold, then brushed on another layer of latex on top of the foam rubber. Sandwiched between the layers of latex, the foam rubber gave the chest bulk and stability. Once the latex set, Morris carefully peeled the latex "chest" out of the mold. He then stitched the sheets together at their edges. A hole was cut out of the body piece where the chest would be sewed in place later.

To make the head, Morris suspended a clay sculpture of a gorilla head into another box and created a mold. To give the latex head body and strength, Morris sandwiched foam rubber, as with the chest, between the latex layers. When the head was dry, Morris slowly pulled the mask out of its mold, and he trimmed out the eyes in the mask with scissors to form eye holes for the wearer. The mouth was formed to be immovable, unlike mouths on costumes today that can open and close. Morris then glued the mask into the hood. The cloth hood draped down beyond the neck and onto the shoulders. The hood also covered the sides and back of the head. Warm air from a hair dryer helped the contact glue set faster. The dynel fur glued onto the hood formed a thick mane that spread onto the shoulders and concealed the neckline.

Morris then transported the chest and the fur-covered bodypiece to a nearby tent-and-awning store in Charlotte where a seamstress, using a powerful sewing machine, sewed the chest piece onto the front of the suit, covering the precut hole. To prevent the chest from shifting under stress, bias tape fabric, which is difficult to tear and reinforces seams, was sandwiched between the wet latex layers at the edges of the chest piece. When the chest was sewed onto the front of the body piece, the bias fabric was sewn through the dynel and cloth backing to add strength to the seams where the chest and body met. The zipper, a heavy-duty type used in the 1950s and '60s on the tops of convertible cars, was sewed on the back of the suit.

Once the wearer clad himself in all the gorilla suit parts, and the dynel fur was smoothly brushed in place to conceal the zipper, the hood-fur blended into the shoulder fur, and the fur on the hands and feet combed into the arms and legs, here stood a most impressive creature for an audience's enjoyment.

During Morris's description, he made several startling comments, without my prompting.

Morris explained that his gorilla suit was cut with long legs and long arms, making the suit loose so that almost anyone could wear it. Also, real gorillas have a low crotch and short legs. With long legs on Morris's suit, the crotch of the suit did hang low. However, Morris said, "I'd say, looking at the Bigfoot in one of those TV productions, the guy who wore the suit must have had his clothes on because the suit was really tight on him."

Bob Heironimus had told me he had *kept his clothes on* when he put on the suit! This was a powerful piece of evidence. Morris had never met or discussed anything with Bob Heironimus in his life. Nor did Morris ever have any contact with Patterson or anyone else associated with the hoax after the gorilla suit arrived in Roger's hands.

"You see," said Morris, "the suit itself created the bulk of the gorilla, I mean from the appearance on the outside. But the guy in the suit was pretty good size. He must have also been heavyset because he really filled that suit out. The suit was not made to fit tight, but it fit tight on him."

Of course, Bob was a strapping, heavyset young man in 1967.

"Uh, how big of a person could fit inside the suit?"

"I'd say a six-foot-tall person."

Bingo! Bob was slightly over six feet.

"How big of a foot could fit inside the latex feet?" I asked.

"Oh, size ten to size twelve."

Bob's feet were size nine-and-a-half.

"How long were the latex feet on your suit?" I asked, knowing that Patterson reported that the Bigfoot prints at the film site were fourteen-and-a-half inches long.

"Oh, I'd say fourteen inches. But you know, the Bigfoot tracks Patterson said he found where he filmed the Bigfoot do *not* match the shape of the feet I made. My latex foot had a big toe and the other four toes ran pretty much in a straight line. I've seen photos of Patterson's Bigfoot tracks, and they don't match the feet I sold to my customers."

This was another revelation of Morris's that was vitally important, if for no other reason than the controversy over this very issue that continues to rage even today. The debate literally began on a global scale, which proves the enormous power and "reach" of television, when the Fox television network aired the highly rated one hour special, *World's Greatest Hoaxes: Secrets Finally Revealed* on December 28, 1998. In the first segment, which was about Bigfoot, analyst, investigative journalist, and researcher Kal K. Korff presented his views on the Patterson film, claiming it was a hoax. Korff based his conclusions after an exhaustive study of the film, noting numerous bits of evidence that to him indicated a suit consisting of several pieces: the exact number in fact that Morris himself would later end up describing!

Korff upset the Bigfoot community further, including such Bigfoot notables as the late Dr. Grover Krantz, when he also said that the bottom of the foot that is visible in Patterson's film as Heironimus is walking does not match the prints that Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin later claimed they recovered and made plaster casts of at the site. Morris's comments vindicate Korff's analysis: the bottom of the foot shown clearly in the Patterson film could not have made the prints that were later cast and have since been shown around the world. A fake film, and now fake prints. Was anything about Bigfoot real?

Korff's final "insult" was when he claimed in the Fox special that the fur line visible on the back of the "creature" in the Patterson film was "suspicious" and entirely consistent with a zipper of a man in a suit. Although Korff's comments were uttered in 1998, they still reverberated among the public, indeed even across the Atlantic, as far away as the United Kingdom, as much as five years later in 2003.

At the Unconvention 2003, held at the prestigious Commonwealth Institute in London, sponsored by *Fortean Times* magazine, Kal Korff was criticized by premiere Bigfoot researcher Loren Coleman in his book *Bigfoot: The True Story of Apes in America*. On page 102, Coleman blasted Korff for his comments on the Fox show, claiming that "Korff appears never to have seen my uncle Wilson's hairy back on the beach in Florida. Or has Korff not even seen a gorilla in a zoo?"

Not only was Coleman's "rebuttal" far from scientific, but Korff was present at the Unconvention 2003 as the main speaker. Ironically, Korff specifically was given "center stage" of the convention by *Fortean Times*, in part to announce that *this book* was being released, and that the Roger Patterson film was now a proven hoax. He later met privately with Coleman and gave him "the news"—much to Coleman's embarrassment—that the man who wore the suit had been found, and that it was in Loren's best interest to drop his longstanding support for the Patterson film.

"Loren Coleman gave me every indication in London he will cooperate and back the truth now," Korff told me as this chapter was being finished. Loren Coleman is right that Kal Korff had never seen his uncle Wilson's back, but he didn't have to. Korff knew the difference between a suit and real animal skin and fur. Morris's comments independently vindicates Korff's research, just as Korff's independently confirms Morris's account.

As Morris continued with his story, he provided further corroboration without being aware of it—proving once again the old adage about the devil being in the details is certainly true.

"By the way," Morris added, "the Bigfoot researchers say that no human can walk that way in the film. Oh, yes they can! When you're wearing long clown's feet, you can't place the ball of your foot down first. You have to put your foot down flat. Otherwise, you'll stumble. Another thing, when you put on the gorilla head, you can only turn your head maybe a quarter of the way. And to look behind you, you've got to turn your head *and* your shoulders *and* your hips. Plus, the shoulder pads in the suit are in the way of the jaw. That's why the Bigfoot turns and looks the way he does in the film. He has to twist his entire upper body."

Yes! In Patterson's film, Bob puts the heel of his foot down first, then the ball of his foot, and then lifts his foot up off the ground, just the way Morris described. Bob had also said that it was difficult to see out of the mask, and the range of motion was limited.

"Would a person who wore the head feel claustrophobic?" I asked. Bob had told me that he felt claustrophobic.

"A lot of people are claustrophobic when their head is inside the mask."

"How much did the suit weigh?" I asked.

"Oh," he thought, "maybe twenty to twenty-five pounds."

Bob had said the suit weighed at least *twenty pounds*.

"Uh, would someone have to help the wearer get into the suit? You told me it was bulky. And with the long arms and the shoulder pads, would the wearer raise his arms above his head?" Patterson and Gimlin had helped Bob into the suit, according to Heironimus, who had to raise his arms to squiggle into the body.

"Yes, the person would raise his arms. He'd put his arms out straight into the gorilla arms and then come up with his own arms."

A pretty close match to Bob's memory of snuggling into the suit, I thought.

"You're certain that the Bigfoot in Patterson's film was wearing your suit?" I challenged him.

"Absolutely," he said firmly. "And Patterson really brushed that fur. You see, I teased the fur on my gorilla suits with a hand brush to give the gorilla a wild, natural look. But Patterson brushed the fur down everywhere on the suit."

"By the way," I said, "do you see breasts on the Bigfoot?"

"Hmm. Breasts? No. My gorillas didn't have breasts. But the chests I made were large. They stick out in front several inches."

And Patterson could have attached black balloons filled with sand to the front of the suit, I thought.

"Let me play devil's advocate," I said. "Skeptics might say, 'Morris has made up a story to help his costume business.' What's your response?"

"Frankly," he said softly, "it might not be good for my business."

"Well, then why are you telling your story now?"

He paused. "Back then, I was making costumes for professional magicians. It wasn't professional to tell people after a costume or a prop was used how it was done. That would kill orders. It made no professional sense to come forth about Bigfoot back then. Professionally, I just couldn't come back when Patterson's film was shown and say, 'It's all a fake.' That's not what you do. But then it got to the point with me that it wasn't a big deal anymore. Well, at one time it was a big deal to me when I first got around to talk about it, but not any more. I've told this story at costume conventions, lectures, magician conventions. I'm surprised in all your research you didn't come across me."

"When did you first start telling people you had sold the suit to Patterson?" I asked.

"Ah, sometime, I think, in the 1980s. I never viewed it as a hoax. I viewed their film as promoting something. I viewed it as a magician sawing a girl in half—that's not a hoax, just an illusion. It wasn't the professional thing for me to do, to tell how an act was done. The Bigfoot thing just wasn't a big deal in my life. In the 1980s, the film didn't have the momentum it had at first. I decided to start talking about it. In the last few years all these documentaries have come out. Most people by now know the film is a hoax, or they should know. We're at a point in the public's relationship with the Bigfoot story, it's time to tell my story. I've been thinking about the story for forty years."

I asked for names and phone numbers of character references. "Certainly." He gave me the information. "Also, as I said, I'll be glad to send you a package with copies of the ads we ran back then, and a photograph of the suit, and our current catalog, and a lot of other material."

"I do appreciate it."

Morris regaled me with several humorous experiences that occurred in his life involving costumes, and we finally said good-bye.

A few days later, I had Ron Quinn, one of Morris's friends, on the phone. He was a garrulous, seventy-year-old man in semiretirement with a colorful life history that included appearing on the cover of *Treasure Magazine* when he and some buddies discovered eighty-two pounds of Spanish gold bullion in the desert. Over the years, he had been featured in the magazine *Arizona Highways* and in various newspapers. He was also a video producer, a writer, and an illustrator—and a maker of latex rubber costume parts, such as noses, ears, and masks, which he sold to wholesalers. One of those wholesalers was Morris. Quinn also was quite familiar with Patterson's film.

"When I was making costume products here in Tucson from 1976 to 1980 I met Morris over the phone," he began. "Later, I visited him in Charlotte. I think it was either around October, the costume season, of last year or the year before, I was talking with Phil on the phone. Out of the blue, he says, 'You know, I am the one who supplied the suit for that Bigfoot film.' I had just read a story about Bigfoot and that some Hollywood people were claiming that John Chambers had made the Bigfoot suit. You know, Chambers was the guy who created the costumes for the movie *Planet of the Apes*. I mentioned Chambers to Phil. He said, 'No, that's not true.' He talked a couple of minutes about it, and that was it."

"Did you have any reason to disbelieve him?" I asked.

"No. He ordered $50,000 worth of product from me in 1980. He paid his bills on time. He's very friendly, easy to get along with. Phil's not the type to start something phony. He's a hard-nosed businessman, and he wouldn't start something to see what would happen. I doubt he'd pull something like that. He has too big a business. He sent me his catalog two years ago. It's huge! *Two inches thick*. Phil doesn't need the publicity. He's not the type to look for people to interview him. If he said he made it, he was telling the truth. I would trust him."

As far as Quinn was concerned, Morris was an honest man.

The next day I connected with Tim Deremer in Canton, Ohio. Deremer, a fifty-three-year-old professional magician, had been featured on television's *Entertainment Tonight* in the early 1990s. Temporarily off the show circuit due to surgery, in 2003 Deremer was the last sideshow performer in the United States. Playing state fairs, his ten-in-one show featured ten acts under one big tent with a big sideshow banner gracing the entrance. The acts included "classics"—Sword Swallower, Fire Eater, Bed of Nails, Electric Chair, Blade Box, and others. Deremer performed the Girl to Gorilla illusion act separately from the ten-in-one.

Deremer informed me that he had first met Morris in 1968 in Canton. Morris was performing his road show at the local American Legion auditorium with local and famous magicians. Deremer bought a gorilla suit from Morris in 1975 for his Girl to Gorilla illusion act. "I've known Phil through magic circles for thirty-five years. I've met him numerous times during those years. He's honest." Deremer was also quite familiar with Patterson's film.

"When did you find out about his story that he supplied the suit for the film?"

"He lectured on that this year, in May, at the Battle of Magicians in Canton. It's a three-day magic convention. They've been going on for thirteen years. He was talking about the Bigfoot film in his lecture."

"What was your reaction?" I asked.

"Well, I missed part of it, but everybody thought it was funny. He had videos and stuff he was showing. He showed the video of the Bigfoot running around."

"Do you consider this story he's telling true?"

"Oh, absolutely!" he said.

We talked for the next twenty minutes about Morris's character.

"Phil is one of those guys who, if he said it happened, it did happen," said Deremer. "Some people exaggerate, but Phil doesn't make stuff up. Anything he would say he would mean it literally. He's the largest wholesale costume guy in the United States, and one of the largest costume companies in the world. I was at his place in September. When I was there, he was having a forty-foot semi loaded with packages. As soon as one pulled out, another pulled in."

"In all the years you've known him, he hasn't pulled off a gag to make money?"

"No. He wouldn't do it for the money. He doesn't need any money. There was a trade show in Orlando two weeks ago, and most people had one or two booths. He had *twelve booths* featuring merchandise he sells. The guy wouldn't do it to make a few bucks. No."

"I'm playing devil's advocate," I said. "Would Phil Morris at sixty-seven years of age and semiretired and thinking like a magician, pull off something like this to see people's reaction, just for the heck of it?"

"No. He wouldn't. I guess he's told that story to people over the years. He wouldn't do this for money. He had the exclusive licensing rights to the Spiderman, Batman, and the Hulk costumes. He's dealt with big movie companies. He wouldn't do this just for a publicity stunt, as rich and successful as he is. Anything he'd say, I'd take literally. He would not make this up for any reason."

The interview had come to a natural close. "Phil is an honest man," Deremer said. "I've never heard anyone say anything bad about him, ever. He's also kindhearted. I bought an elf costume from him recently, just a few hundred dollars, not much. I was going to use it in the malls. You know, take photos of people with the elf. Well, I find out that Phil is running around at night to places like Wal-Mart trying to find insoles for the guy wearing the suit so his feet wouldn't hurt. You know, the elf standing up all day. Here's the president of this big company doing that kind of thing. He also helped me when something very valuable was stolen from me recently. He called up the FBI and made fifty phone calls trying to track my property down. That's the kind of man he is. He's one of the greatest people I've met."

That evening I e-mailed blowups of frames from Patterson's film to Morris.

When I called Morris the next day to get his reaction to what the blowups revealed, his analysis completely blew away the notion that there was a real Bigfoot in the film.

"That's your suit you're looking at in the blowup—the shape, the color, the texture, the look and feel?"

"Absolutely!" he said. "I'm looking at the blowups. I've never seen such detail before. That's *my* suit. I know it's my suit. And the guy who wore the suit had his clothes on. I'd bet he had his billfold or keys in his pocket, because you can see a distortion in the suit from them. And you can tell it's a suit because on a real animal the color of the fur varies, there are highlights, differences in color. On my suit, the brown hair was constant. That's because the dynel was one color."

"Can you see the zipper?"

"Not as clearly as on the documentary videos. But . . . ," he paused. "There's a line there, little hard to see, but it goes from the buttocks up to the back of the neck. Remember, Roger asked me about how to conceal the zipper, so. . . ."

"The suit seems to sag in the back, doesn't it?" I commented.

"Remember, we made the crotch sag and the legs long on purpose. This guy really filled the suit, and some crotch is showing, but not much."

"The feet?"

"The one blowup I'm looking at here shows the foot in the air [frame 323]. The heel, it's too square-looking. It's a dead giveaway. Those are definitely my feet that I sold him. "

"You're sure?"

"Oh, yes! Now, those arms on the Bigfoot—"

I could "see" him looking intently at the blowup of the Bigfoot glancing at Patterson with "the look," the Bigfoot's arms extended out in full swing.

"The arms are way out of proportion to the body," he said. "They're long. The tips of the fingers almost come to his knees. In the blowup, you can see clearly what look like extensions to the arms. Like I told you, the way to always make costume's arms longer is to extend them with sticks, inside the sleeves. The gloves are then attached to the sticks, and the sleeves are pulled down to hide the sticks. Of course, in the case of the Bigfoot film, the man inside the suit wouldn't put his real hands inside the gloves. He wouldn't need to since the gloves would just hang there as the Bigfoot walked."

This statement posed a problem, I thought to myself. Bob Heironimus had remembered slipping his hands into something that felt like gloves. How could he have done that? I thought. If extension-sticks were part of the arms, would Bob's arms and hands have been long enough to reach the gloves on the end of the extension-sticks?

I presented the problem to Morris. However, Bob's sleeve length was thirty-five inches, I told Morris. Perhaps that was what made the gorilla arms look so long.

"Like I said," Morris replied, "we did leave the gorilla arms extra long and the pant legs long. Well," he considered, "it's possible that if there were extensions in the sleeves, the man in the suit could make a fist and put it part way into the glove. Maybe the first knuckles on his hands could only fit into the opening of the glove, and no further. Maybe what he felt was the opening of the glove."

That was certainly a possibility, I thought.

"There's one thing that *is different* from my suit," Morris said. "It's the mask on the Bigfoot. That's *not* my mask."

"Really?"

I was surprised at his statement, but I shouldn't have been. Why should the face on the Bigfoot mask be the face of Morris's gorilla? I had studied the same blowup image of the Bigfoot mask on and off for years as I investigated Patterson. The mask definitely did not have classic gorilla features. Patterson's mask was partially human, partially ape, a strange combination. Perhaps I had been more surprised at Morris's candor and openness about the mask. For more than three hours during the past five days, I had been experiencing the refreshing voice of a man who wasn't trying to force his way into the Roger Patterson story, wasn't seeking praise, wasn't fishing for money and had no appearance of lying. He was simply expressing his experience with Patterson. I appreciated Morris's frankness and honesty. I had become numb to so much loose thinking and obfuscation during my years-long investigation, that it was a foreign experience to hear a professional costume maker speak forthrightly about what his professional magician's and costume-maker's eye was detecting in Patterson's Bigfoot suit. Morris had been in the costume business nearly forty years, and I was extremely happy to hear from an expert talk critically about what I had long suspected about the mask.

"In fact," Morris said, "I'd say the nose is a prosthetic. I see a line running down the edge of the nose and underneath the nose. The line makes the nose look like a separate piece. Are you sure this isn't the nose of the man who wore the suit?"

"I asked him that, and he said definitely not."

"Strange. What amazes me is they went to this extent with the detail. Back in those days, Patterson wouldn't have known about photo digitizing to look for detail in an image. Back then, you couldn't look at much detail in a photo. I don't know why he went to all this trouble with the detail he did because he was standing so far away from the Bigfoot when he filmed it, and he was moving his camera all around. Why would he think anyone would notice the face?"

Morris was genuinely puzzled.

"Roger was a stickler for detail," I said. "He was an illustrator. He studied objects. He drew animals and humans with great detail. He was an observer. He'd want to make sure all the details in the Bigfoot were exactly right just in case somebody studied the photos too closely. I know how he thought."

"OK, that helps," responded Morris. "I didn't know he was an artist. Well, looking at this Bigfoot mask, it could be one piece and one prosthetic, that is, the nose. But he would have to adhere the mask to the man's face with spirit gum, a kind of shellac. Spirit gum has been used in theaters since the days of Shakespeare."

"Wow! Glue the mask right onto the skin of the man's face?" I winced.

"Yeah. The mask looks like it's really close to the face. Sculpted the way it is, it fits well around the eyes. That's why I wonder if it was glued onto the man's face. But only a professional makeup artist could have done it. And a makeup person would have to be at the film site with Roger and the others."

"I don't think that happened," I jumped in, "not where these guys were, in the woods. Anyway, the man who wore the suit told me he put a mask *down over his head.* A one-piece helmet."

"A helmet?"

"He said that when he put on the head, it felt like a helmet," I explained, "and there was some room between the top of his head and the helmet."

"That's interesting," Morris said. "We did put foam between the latex layers to give the head stability. It would have been kind of like a helmet. But, this nose. Roger could have *replaced* the nose on my mask with the prosthetic one. Did the man in the suit say that Roger made a prosthetic nose?"

"I asked him that. He said he didn't know."

"Could that nose on the Bigfoot be the nose of the man who wore the suit?" Morris tried again.

"No. He said, 'Definitely not.'"

"Oh." Morris fell silent. "Well, this Bigfoot mask wasn't on the market in 1967. But the technology was emerging. About that time, the movie *Planet of the Apes* used special ape masks. The ape's mouths moved. Maybe Patterson brought in somebody to work on the face."

"Could he have made his own mask?" I threw out.

"What he could have done is pull my mask out and replace it with a different mask. See, my mask was glued onto the hood."

"Oh."

"The mask is placed inside the hood and glued on," Morris said. "Roger could have taken the hood off the mask and then glued his own mask onto the hood. That's not impossible."

"Could he have taken a razor blade and cut just the face out of your mask and then glued on his own latex face?"

"That's not very practical," Morris replied. "It would be better to make another mask."

Suddenly, a memory popped into my mind. "I just remembered that Patterson once sculpted a gorilla head out of clay. One of the people I interviewed saw the gorilla sculpture in his house. Could he have sculpted a head of his own, or at least the face, and made a mold?"

"Yes. He could make his own mask. After the sculpture, the next step is to make the mold. He could have gone to the library and got a book and found out how. That's what I did when I got started!" He chuckled.

His voice rose a notch as he came to a realization: "Roger knew how to use plaster of Paris. Remember, he made casts of Bigfoot tracks using plaster of Paris. He could have bought the latex. There were all kinds of liquid latex available. It would take him probably one gallon to make the mask. Looking at the blowup of the Bigfoot face, he would have known about age lines. The *Planet of the Apes* technology was there. But I seriously doubt that he could have made a Bigfoot suit. He would have done anything to have a gorilla suit. As I said, in the 1960s, the only suits were those used on a movie set. Individual guys would make a single gorilla suit for themselves to make a movie."

It appeared I had given Patterson too much credit to make his own suit, but I was confident that with his talents he could have modified the suit, and even make a mask. "At that time you were the *only one* in the country who was making gorilla suits on a mass scale?" I asked.

He chuckled. "Well, not on a mass scale. The suits were all handmade. We were only turning out only two to three gorilla suits a month, at most. I tried to have one in stock all the time. The whole process of making a suit took at least a week. Remember, I had to make different molds for the head, feet, chest, head. They'd have to dry, set up. Then I'd paint the latex on and leave the latex to dry. Amy was cutting material out and sewing it. Then there was the sewing on of the chest and zipper. And there's an exacting process in how to cut the dynel material. The dynel fibers came out of the front side of the material to make the piece look like a piece of fur. If you went in with a pair of scissors to trim the dynel, you'd end up cutting the plush off. The fur would now be short and you'd have a big indentation where you could see a seam. Making a suit isn't easy, especially the way we made them. It was a long, laborious process. I doubt Roger would take the time."

"I agree with you," I said. "Actually he hated to work. He didn't have the patience. He preferred living on handouts."

"Well, you notice he never sent the suit back!" Morris laughed.

"Right. He must have kept it, and I think he modified parts of it. I'm sure he could modify it. He worked in leather. He had a fine eye for detail. For example, the Bigfoot mask. Also, you said Amy put some extra dynel pieces in with the suit when it was mailed to Roger?"

"Yes."

"That's a clue. He probably added it to the suit at various places."

"He could have," Morris said. "If he made his own mask, he'd want to put some fur on the cheeks, around the sides of the face. He could have put more hair on the tops of the feet and hands, for example."

"So, again you believe you were the only one in the country who could have supplied Patterson with a suit?"

"No question about it."

I glanced at my watch. At the same time, Morris fell silent, sensing that the time for this latest round in the interview process was up. "The package you'll get tomorrow weighs ten pounds! You'll see our most recent big catalog and supplements. I also put in the package a photo of the exact type of suit I sold to Patterson. It's a photo taken about 1967 on my Dr. Evil show, of a gorilla in a cage eating a banana. The legs on the gorilla's legs look short because the crotch is just above the person's knee, like a gorilla. But as I said, the guy who wore the suit in Roger's film filled the suit, and the crotch was pulled up. Also, I'm enclosing photocopies of some pages from *Amusement Business*. You'll see the ad we were running when Roger called us. We were discounting our suits."

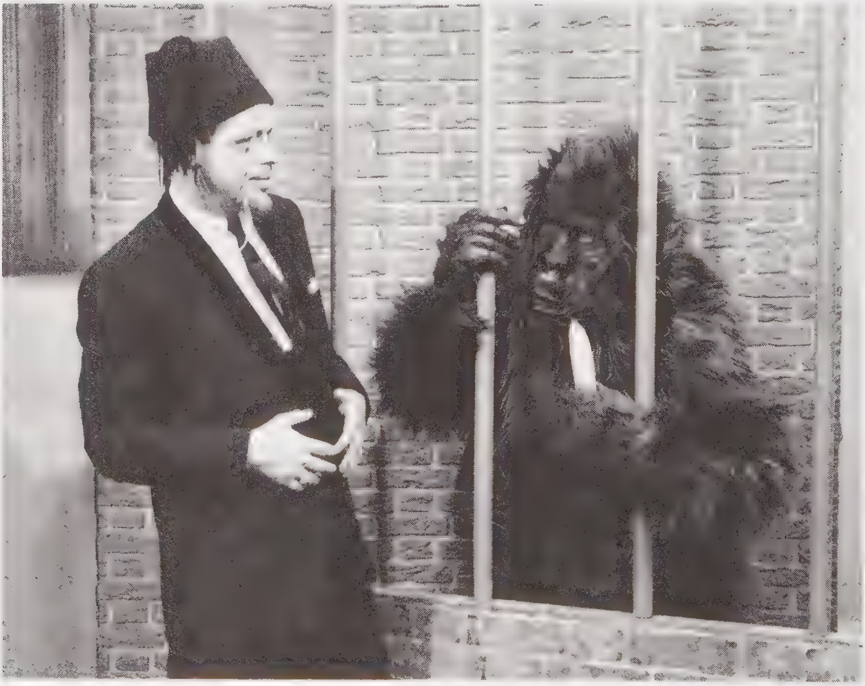
"That's another clue," I said. "Patterson never had much money. Also, I think he'd want to avoid Hollywood. He'd probably buy a suit from someone on the other side of the country."

"Also, remember I mentioned that *Amusement Business* magazines were running stories on anything dealing with outdoor amusements. That included rodeo shows and rodeo stars. Patterson could have picked up a copy of the magazine on one of the rodeo lots and found our ad."

"I look forward to receiving the package. I'd like to talk again."

"Agreed," he said, and we signed off.

* * *



Photograph of the exact same type of gorilla suit Roger Patterson bought from Philip Morris in or about August 1967. The photograph was taken on the set of *Dr. Evil's* (Philip Morris) *Horror Theater* television show. Courtesy of Philip Morris.

On December 2, Pat called me at work. "The package arrived!"

That evening I excitedly sorted through the impressive stack of material.

Here were copies of display ads from several sample issues of *Amusement Business* magazine from 1966, 1967, and 1968 advertising Morris's gorilla suits. There were cartoon illustrations of gorillas kidnapping pretty women graced the ads. The gorilla drawings reminded me of Patterson's handiwork, but the cartoons in Morris's ads were much better. Morris was right about Patterson possibly reading *Amusement Business* for its rodeo news. Patterson would have been attracted to the magazine's stories on western movie stars, country western singers, rodeos, and traveling western shows.

My eyes alighted on the photo of Morris's brown gorilla suit, the exact type he had sold to Patterson. Photographed on one of Dr. Evil's shows in the late sixties, the gorilla suit concealed an actor inside, trapped in a cage, with a banana in one immense, hairy hand, and the other thick-knuckled, wrinkled hand clasped around the bar of the cage. Dr. Evil (Philip Morris), acting as "Mustaffa" festooned with a fez, stood nearby with a mild smile on his face.

In addition, there was a hefty pile of costume catalogs, some in full color, and one several inches thick and weighing several pounds. They contained many pictures, the pages paperclipped by Morris, of a wide selection of gorilla parts. The parts included ape hands and feet. I found amusing pictures on one page of a make-it-yourself gorilla, in which a person could buy parts one at a time, such as a gorilla chest by itself. Many more pages presented a mind-boggling selection of other costumes and props, a number of them wickedly gruesome, others from the world of innocent fantasy. Consistently in the center of the catalog covers were images of an impish, pudgy-cheeked Morris, who had a striking resemblance to singer Mel Torme, usually colorfully costumed as a carnival sideshow barker, circus ringmaster, or magician, grinning in delight, a twinkle in his eye, and a soft wave of his hand inviting the reader inside the catalog pages. Those pages blazed with fantasies. It was quite clear that Morris was the king of costumes. This man, I thought, had risen from a maker of gorilla costumes in the basement of his house on Kistler Avenue in Charlotte to the position of a millionaire. I sensed more than forty years of real-life experiences in his catalogs, and a considerable knowledge of gorilla suits.

After hastily digesting what I could from the near-encyclopedic mass of information, I called Morris the next evening. This was our final interview. I already knew that the Bigfoot in the film was a fake. The fakery came down to the feet of the costume and to the expert eye of a costume maker.

There was no more need to discuss the Bigfoot mask; it wasn't Morris's gorilla mask. But the hood on the mask appeared to be his; he created it. The Bigfoot hands were gloves; Morris had created them. Morris knew that the body piece was his; he and his wife had created it. By 1967, he had made enough suits to know a Morris suit from any other suit on the market, of which there were basically none. When it came down to the video images of the striding Bigfoot at Bluff Creek, which he had viewed on documentaries many times, and to the blowups of selected film frames, the fakery of the Bigfoot film came down to the feet (like both Korff and Morris said), a few other finer details on the Bigfoot suit, and minutiae that only Morris's experienced professional eye could decipher with unquestioned expertise. Our hour-long discussion boiled down to the following:

"Are you certain that the feet in Patterson's film are your gorilla feet?" I asked Morris.

"Absolutely! The feet on the Bigfoot in the film are feet I made in my basement. I made them from a mold."

"Why do the feet in frames 61 and 323 look differently?" I said. One foot (in frame 353) appeared rectangular in shape with a square heel and without toes. The other foot (in frame 61) had a round heel with a smooth indentation along part of the side of the foot, and the toes were clearly visible. Morris concluded that because of the different viewing angles and the possibility that the toes in frame 323 had picked up pink-white sand typical at Bluff Creek, the toes had changed color, thus blending into the background colors in the film frame.

"Why did you make the gorilla feet look like a human's feet?" I asked. "You know, a gorilla's feet have that big toe sticking out away from the other toes to allow the gorilla to grip things. Also, the foot in Frame 61 is much longer than an ape's foot."

"True," answered Morris.

Hearing the confidence in his voice, I knew that his answer would make complete, logical sense. And it did.

"The foot you see in frame 61 is long," his explanation began. "I made the feet the way I did for several reasons. First, so the actor could put his foot inside the feet! See, I didn't know the size of a customer's feet when he bought the suit. So, I purposely made the feet long. They were one-size-fits-all. The feet were like slippers. If the feet were too long for someone, he could stuff paper or padding inside the front of the foot. That way his feet would fit tightly. There was another reason." He cleared his throat. "The foot you see there in frame 61 is an easier shape to do. If I tried to make a mold of an ape's foot, with its gripping toe sticking out away from the other toes, it was impossible to pull the sculpture out of the mold without breaking the mold. The gripping toe would be at an angle, and you'd have to pull on the sculpture at such an opposing angle to the gripping toe, that the mold would break. And, there was another reason for the shape."

By this time Morris had convinced me totally why he had formed his gorilla's feet to the length and shape he did. But I listened nonetheless, fascinated how his mind worked out costume design problems.

"In those days most of the actors wearing gorilla suits acted on a stage," he continued. "The audience was sitting lower than the height of the stage. The audience was actually *looking up* at the gorilla. So the audience wouldn't even see what was on the actors' feet. A lot of actors just wore their own shoes. The audience didn't even notice it. Also, the audience was interested in the gorilla act, not the feet."

"I see," I said.

Then Morris presented yet another illuminating tidbit of information about a gorilla costume, which I had come to expect from him.

"Also, there was another reason. At that time, when he called me, I knew where all the suits were that I had sold. I knew who I had sold them to, and they were all being used in the Girl to Gorilla illusion."

"I want to clarify something," I ventured. "Didn't you say in an earlier interview that there was too much hair on the feet of the Bigfoot in the film?"

"I remember I made my feet with and without fur. On the feet with fur, the fur was around the ankles and on the top of the foot, but the whole foot wasn't covered with fur."

"It looks to me," I chimed in, "that in frame 323, fur is all over the foot, on the top and sides, right down to the edge of the soles."

"Yes. It looks that way."

"Maybe that's why Patterson asked for that extra dynel," I speculated. "To make the foot look more Bigfoot-like. By the way, you said the soles were made of neoprene?"

"Right. The neoprene covered the soles from the heel up to the toes, not quite the entire length of the foot. I bought the neoprene from a shoe supply store." He paused. "That reminds me. I had forgotten. The bottom of the feet should have been *black*. The neoprene was black when you bought it. It's not black in the blowups."

I said quickly, "Patterson could have painted the soles."

"True, or the black soles picked up the pink-white sand as the Bigfoot walked."

"Well," I concluded, "we can say the Bigfoot is a fake just because of the feet alone. Why? *Because you made the feet!* I first had suspicions about the feet when I watched the Fox TV special, *World's Greatest Hoaxes Finally Revealed* in 1998, and I had wondered about the feet since then. The major investigator on the Fox special, Kal Korff, who looked into the fake suit issue, also pointed out the zipper line on the back of the suit. I'm glad now you, too, an expert costume maker with your years of experience has noticed it."

The time on my watch told me I would be writing into the early morning hours to finish up the Philip Morris breakthrough story. "Mr. Morris, I want to ask you a few last questions before we put the interview to bed."

"Sure."

"Is that your suit in that Bigfoot film?" I projected the question sharply, in a challenging tone.

"Absolutely. No question."

"But how do you know that that suit is *your suit*?" I injected frustration into my voice. "Couldn't it be another person's suit?"

"When I saw the film on television, I knew within seconds that I was looking at my suit. I knew it! That suit was the style of my gorilla suit."

I continued launching my barrage of questions. "But, since the man inside the suit filled out the suit, and the crotch wasn't sagging, and the legs of the suit were now tight on the man, *how could the suit still look like your suit*?"

With complete assurance, he replied, "His filling out the suit wouldn't change the characteristics of the suit."

"What are those characteristics?"

"It's the things we've been talking about, the feet, the arms, the hood, the fur," he said. "And I knew the shape of my suit. I recognized my suit because I had just made it."

"What if the suit was somebody else's suit, and you mistook the suit in the film for yours?"

"No. My suit was popular then. Like I told you before, it was being used in the Girl to Gorilla illusion all over the country. I was using it in my Dr. Evil show and in my touring stage shows. I *knew* my suit. And of course I was making the suit." He laughed.

I added yet another question. "Where were you when you saw Patterson's film? Were you at home?"

"Yes. At Kistler Avenue. If I remember, a television show was making a news story out of it. You know, 'A Bigfoot has been sighted and filmed at Walnut Creek.'"

I interrupted, "Probably Willow Creek."

"Walnut Creek, Willow Creek, wherever it was. The TV news was showing the film, and the moment I saw the Bigfoot, I knew it immediately. I yelled, 'That's my suit!' I yelled for Amy. I said something like, 'There's our gorilla suit on TV!'"

"What did she do?"

"I think she was in another room, and she came running into where I was. She looked at the TV and said something like, 'Yeah! Look!' She knew." He let out a big laugh.

It *was* funny, I thought, especially when the laughter was coming from the creator of the suit himself. I said, "What did you feel when you saw your suit being worn in the film? Were you angry that the suit was used in a hoax to defraud the public?"

Long silence. "No, not anger. I looked at like it was an illusion, a publicity stunt. I thought, 'Give it another six months and it'll die out.' But then it kept going. It lost its serious punch when Roger died. But the most amazing thing was these professors. Here they were saying this was a Bigfoot, *when I knew it was a guy in my suit!* I'd laugh. In recent years, I'd recount what happened, and laugh."

"Let me play devil's advocate again."

"I understand, go ahead," Morris said genially.

"The skeptics will say you're telling this story of yours now because you want the publicity, want to make money. What will you tell them?"

"I'd tell them that this isn't the time to do it. The time to do it was when it was hot. It's not hot anymore. If I was ever going to do it, I should have done it then. No, I have no interest."

I kept on. "What if the believers in the film just call you a liar to your face? What will you say to them?"

"'Ha, ha. What will I say to them?" I could picture his curious mind pondering the many directions he could go in. "Unfortunately back then, we didn't have a photocopier. We were engaged in business transactions that we didn't feel needed a lot of record-keeping, and we didn't have time. Of course, if I would have known I would have needed a record of the sale forty years later, I would have done things differently. Regardless of what you say, with those people you'll *never* convince them. There's nothing you can say. You know, there's a new generation today that doesn't know *anything* about the film. They know *nothing*. It's amazing, so much time has gone by that nobody knows how this thing got started. Anyone who has any intelligence can see it's a man in a gorilla suit."

Morris wasn't finished. "So, you ask me what would I say to them? Well, I don't want to make a rude remark."

I could appreciate that. Sometimes I, too, was at a loss for words when it came to blind, willful ignorance and uncritical thinking. For some of these people, as long as science never finds the elusive Bigfoot, they think that is hard evidence that such creatures exist!

"We're finished!" I announced. "I appreciate the many hours you've give to this. I know it was a lot of work. I'll stay in touch with you."

After our good-byes, I sat back and rubbed my eyes. I could see that I might be still typing when the sun came up. Well, Bob Heironimus's belief, which he had expressed in one of our interviews, that he thought Roger had skinned a dead, red horse and made the Bigfoot suit himself was false. But that was okay; it was one of those rumors that I'm sure Patterson loved to hear, or perhaps he had made the claim to his buddies to distract them from looking elsewhere for the truth.

In my mind, I formulated an overarching conclusion for the book, now that another key player in the Roger Patterson story had surfaced into the light to speak the truth. The latest player, Philip Morris, had followed on the heels of many of the other major players. His role was significant: now we knew where the "Bigfoot" suit had come from, or rather we should say, the gorilla suit.

Bob Heironimus had spoken up. He was a hero in my eyes; he had the fortitude to get his story off his chest, and he had been honest and truthful. That wasn't a bad decision for him, since a clear conscience, at any age, is always a good thing.

Al DeAtley had spoken up. Well, perhaps a bit reluctantly. But I had to hand it to him: at least he said he financially supported the hoax, and that he hadn't altogether felt good about it. But, the oddest thing was his memory of how the film was processed in what seems like world record time, literally, just to show it in time at his house.

That left Roger Patterson to speak, but, of course, he was dead; so I had to speak for him through chronicling his adventures and various scams. The interviews of everyone else presented here speak for themselves, literally.

Two others were left to speak up: Patty Patterson and Bob Gimlin.

Bob Heironimus had said that Patty Patterson was looking at him, Roger, and Bob Gimlin through a window in the back of the Patterson house in Tampico when Heironimus put on the gorilla suit to begin practicing as a Bigfoot for the hoax. But Patty Patterson has not spoken up.

Then, there is Bob Gimlin. He has not spoken either. Will he ever confess, now that "the game" is over?

Who exactly was that second man with Roger when Roger phoned Philip Morris to buy the gorilla suit? Morris said the voice was not a woman's. So, who could it be? DeAtley? Or Gimlin? Or someone else?

Bigfoot was dead, but was it *dead enough, if there is any such thing?*

I let the headstone slip from my hands while preparing to leave this graveyard that the Patterson film hoax now thankfully and rightfully rests in. As the stone thundered into place at the head of the grave, permanently insuring that the scam will never rise again, I left, and then started feverishly writing in order to give the world these truths of the infamous Roger Patterson Bigfoot film hoax.

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GREG LONG is a professional writer, investigative journalist, and editor who lives in Mill Creek, Washington. He has been researching and writing about "mysteries" and unexplained phenomena of the Pacific Northwest for twenty-five years. His work has been featured on radio and television, including the Discovery Channel. Long also publishes his findings via his popular Web site: http://www.northwestmysteries.com.

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